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The Magazine of Unusual Film & Television

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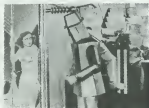
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## DEPARTMENTS

<b>Re:EDITS</b> .....	7
<i>Editorial Opinion, Ideas and Announcements</i>	
<b>TRIVIA TRIX</b> .....	8
<i>More than Just the Usual Questions and Answers</i>	
<b>CINEMA SOURCEBOOK</b> .....	12
<i>Reviews of the Newest in Filmbook Literature</i>	
<b>VIDEOSCAN</b> .....	14
<i>Rare and Unusual Video Releases</i>	

## FEATURES

### DICK MILLER: The Early Years ..... 16

*Anecdotes and Opinions from the Actor who Worked for Over a Decade with "B" Movie Maker Roger Corman*

### SPACE PATROL: Missions of Daring In the Name of Early Television ..... 22

*Interviews with All the Remaining Cast Members from One of the Longest Running Live TV Science Fiction Shows*



### TOBOR THE GREAT ..... 40

*All Kids love Robots, but in the 1950s SF Mini-Classic, TOBOR returns the Favor*

### ED BERNDT on THE BOWERY BOYS ..... 44

*Director Ed Berndt Recalls his Early Career Working with Leo Gorcey and Huntz Hall*

### PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE ..... 50

*Director Ed Wood Jr.'s Unfortunate fiasco has Become a Cult Favorite at "Worst of the Worst" Film Festivals*

### CLASSIFIEDS ..... 55

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# FILMFAX

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## **MEDIA SHOCK:** *Confessions of an Addict*

Here we stand, somewhere in the middle of the eighth decade of the 20th century, watching as the art of moviemaking reaches for technical perfection. STAR WARS, INDIANA JONES, and other media masterplans have saturated our pop culture with new language, new toys, and big bucks at the box office. Hollywood, Wall Street and the White House have become close friends. It's all very modern.

So, why FILMFAX? Isn't it a little eccentric to launch a national publication devoted entirely to older, more obscure film and early television programming?

Yes. Definitely. And it's about time.

Intelligent journalism in this area is of documentary importance. Time is slipping by and the faces of Old Hollywood are fading rapidly. Many have already been put in the ground. Traditional theater houses are falling into disrepair, knocked down or renovated into mini-movie marts. Drive-ins have been sold for land. Specialty theaters are closing their doors against seasonal floods of mainstream celluloid. Home video and cable television have taken their place, rerouting the nation's viewing habits into the realm of consumer technology. Unavoidably, our tastes have become economic . . . popcorn is cheaper at home.

We are the mass media monkeys of the '80s, converts to the cathode way, willing volunteers for the sensory experiments of mental moviemakers and high-speed video technicians. Admittedly, we are smarter, more sophisticated as an audience. But we have also paid the price of admission, an emotional fee for our pleasure: from satisfaction, to saturation, to cynicism. Like Hollywood, we have lost our innocence—it just took us longer.

Media shock, overload, addiction. Stunned, our imaginations wander, searching for something new to pacify an overstimulated sense-of-wonder. Something, possibly, from a simpler time. Something less intense but more entertaining. Something not sold over the counter along with the other generic movie medicines.

Unconsciously, we find ourselves looking to the past. And remembering . . .

From the late 1930s through the early 1960s, low budget films and live television provided audiences across the country with an alternative form of entertainment. The naive intelligence of those black and white decades at least gave us the opportunity to relax while we enjoyed. It was a time of independent productions and uncomplicated ideas—a time when critical judgments were left to the audience and not predisposed by well-rehearsed media critics. Popular opinion had not yet confused our daily lives with overlapping dialogue.

In the past, only limited doses of vintage TV reruns or late night movie programming have been available to those of us for early Hollywood historicism. Now, with cable TV and home video options, lesser known "B" movies and "golden age" television have become more accessible to the modern videophile. Media technology has come full circle. Like the mad scientists it has glorified in the past, the entertainment industry has found new ways to reanimate old parts.

However, not all of us have cable TV, or VCRs with an extensive tape library. But all of us possess curiosity, imagination, and a taste for that where FILMFAX comes in.

FILMFAX is a contemporary journal of classic and unusual cinema and television as we view it today, featuring up-to-date articles and first-hand interviews with the creative individuals directly involved. But make no mistake—FILMFAX is not a "nostalgia" magazine. FILMFAX is a graphic time machine powered by your interest, and the memories and opinions of those who have contributed to its editorial body. Front-of-the-book departments such as Trivia Trix, VideoScan, and Cinema Sourcebook are intended to supply the reader with entertaining information in neglected areas. Our feature sections in this and future issues provide full-length discussion in a variety of categories: Early Television, Vintage "B" Movies, Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror, Adventure, Comedy, Mystery, Serials and Westerns. So settle into your easy chair, turn to the next page and slip back into the recent past with us. It's remembering time . . .

*MICHAEL STEIN*  
—Michael Stein, Editor

P.S. Write to us soon and tell us what you liked or disliked about FILMFAX, what you would keep, what you would change, what was wrong, what was right, etc. Address all letters to FILMFAX RESPONSE, Box 1900, Evanston, IL, 60201. Our letters column will appear next issue. Thank . . .



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**PHOTO #1:** Director Virgil Vogel poses with a furry friend in this monster movie shot in Lapland. Name the film.



**PHOTO #2:** Stars Raymond Massey and Pearl Argyle chat with the screenwriter of this 1935 epic. Name the man and the movie.



**PHOTO #3:** Boris Karloff sits patiently as his Frankenstein face is applied. Name the make-up designer of work.



**PHOTO #6:** This early 40s "Puppetooner" sits happily in the midst of his creations. Name the man and four of his films.

### "SCI-FI" STOOGE GOES SOLO

**Q:** It's hard to picture The Three Stooges as being serious about anything, either individually or as the ever-crazy slap-happy trio. But in 1957, Moe Howard made a rare solo appearance in a real honest-to-goodness serious science fiction film. What was the name of this "masterful" movie?

**A:** In 1957, Moe Howard appeared in 20th Century Fox's SF thriller, *SPACE MASTER X-7*. The Stooges contract had expired, so before regrouping with Larry Fine and new partner, "Curly Joe" Di Rita for the feature-length space farce, *HAVE ROCKET, WILL TRAVEL* (1959), Howard steered straight for a change in *SPACE MASTER X-7* with his characterization of an amiable cab driver.

*SPACE MASTER X-7* concerned one of those stubborn outer space fungi that invariably attach themselves to returning American rocketships. The fungus turns into "space rust" after being tinged with human blood, then has to snack on more humans to keep from spreading (Moe, Larry . . . Cheese!) The

versatile Ed Bernds directed Howard not only in *SPACE MASTER*, but also, along with the other Stooges, in *THE THREE STOOGES MEET HERCULES*, and *THE THREE STOOGES IN ORBIT* in 1962. (For more information on Ed Bernds' career see the *BOWERY BOYS* interview also in this issue.)

In 1972, at the age of 77, Moe Howard made his final film appearance in *DR. DEATH, SEEKER OF SOULS*. It's a stupid film, but just seeing Howard, even in a guest shot, is worth the price of the ticket . . . make that a video tape rental. Coming soon in *FILMFAV* will be a behind-the-scenes look at some of the later Stooge feature-length genre films. Don't miss it!

### WHERE THE VOICE ARE . . .

**Q:** Rod Serling, Walter Winchell and Leonard Nimoy have all, at some time in their careers, lent distinctive voices to some rather sleazy Hollywood entrees.\* What popular larc might talk show announcer also contributed his narrative talents to the 1955 b/w film, *DEMENTIA*? Need a hint? "This one's for you . . ."

**A:** "Heeereee Eddie!" Yep, Johnny Carson's jovial sidekick and part-time hops huckster, Ed McMahon was the narrator for *DEMENTIA*, an hour-long horror film which was immediately declared by the 1955 New York State Board of Censors to be "inhuman, indecent, and the quintessence of gruesomeness!" (They should see *The Tonight Show* these days.) Written, produced and directed by John Parker, the film starred Adrienne Barrett, Bruno Ve Sota and Angelo Rossitto, and should not be confused with Francis Ford Coppola's fascinating fearfilm *DEMENTIA-13*. Three years after its release (and a year after its re-release), scenes from *DEMENTIA* turned up on-screen in the now-famous "theater sequence" of Paramount's *THE BLOB*. They weren't eaten.

\*Just in case you were wondering: Walter Winchell was the voice-over for the 1961 b/w exploitation film *WILD HARVEST* in which a sadistic ranch foreman forces female migrant workers to literally eat dirt, and is eventually murdered with a pruning shears. In 1975, Rod Serling condescended to nar-





**PHOTO #3:** Director Sid Pink, Norman Tourog (inside plant) and Noro Hayden pose for this gag shot. Name the movie.



**PHOTO #7:** Back down on Earth, these three actors take time out for a "checkers break." Name the men and the movie.



**PHOTO #4:** Director Fritz Lang (right) rehearses a scene from *METROPOLIS*. How long was the original uncut version?



**PHOTO #8:** Rarely seen on camera, this pioneer monster-maker poses with one of his creations. Name him and the film.

rate *THE OUTER SPACE CONNECTION*, a somewhat questionable documentary by Sunn Classics which forwarded the premise that "aliens" were responsible for almost every unexplained event in history. And Leonard Nimoy supplied the voice of the strange bearded man who confronts Ed Nelson at the entrance of the alien spaceship in *THE BRAIN EATERS*, American International's 1958 film adaptation of Robert A. Heinlein's *THE PUPPET MASTERS*.)

### GATORS, GRUNTS & GARTERS

**Q:** A lot of women claim their husbands are beasts, but sometimes it's really true. Who played Beverly Garland's scaly spouse in the 1959 film, *THE ALLIGATOR PEOPLE*?

**A:** Richard Crane was turned into an upright alligator, sans tail, by yet another dingbat doctor. But before roaming the Louisiana swamp and becoming a snapping suitcase with feet, Crane patrolled the galaxy in the "Orbit Jet" as *Rocky Jones, Space Ranger*. The series was rather short lived, how-



ever, lasting only two months.

It might be interesting to note that *Rocky Jones* was shot at the same old Hall Roach studios where many of the Laurel and Hardy and Little Rascal films had been made, and that under the experienced hand of producer Ronald Reed, an average episode cost only about \$8,000 to make. Reed's forte had been commercials, so he knew how to get his money's worth. Also featured in the *Rocky Jones* cast were Scott Beckett (Winky), Sally Mansfield (Vena Ray),



Robert Lyden (Bobby), Maurice Cass (Prof. Newton) and Dian Fauntelle (Yarra).

### LITTLE, LITTLER, LITTEST

**Q:** The concept of reducing people to doll-size has been the theme of many science fiction and/or fantasy films, from the silent era to contemporary Hollywood. From the giant telephones, oversize rocking chairs and gargantuan cigars of *BEGGARS ON HORSEBACK* (1925, silent) to Dr.



Pretentious' miniature experiments with artificial life in *THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1935) to *DR. CYCLOPS* (1959) to the classic *THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN* (1957) and the low-budget *THE PUPPET PEOPLE* (1958) the list stretches on up to the present. But the question remains, what was the first talking picture to "scientifically miniaturize" human beings, and who directed it?

**A:** Based on Abraham Merritt's novel *Burn, Witch, Burn*, *THE DEVIL DOLL* (1936) was directed by Tod Browning and starred Lionell Barrymore as an unjustly imprisoned financier who escapes from Devil's Island and uses a shrinking serum, discovered by a fellow prisoner (Henry B. Walthall) to avenge himself against his crooked business partners. Maureen O'Sullivan played his daughter.

Tod Browning (1882-1962) was one of the most famous and infamous directors of the genre. After Browning's highly successful *DRACULA* for Universal in 1932, plus the release of Universal's other horror hits, *FRANKENSTEIN* (1931) and *MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE* (1932), MGM decided to hop on the horror bandwagon and got Browning himself to take the reins.

The result was *FREAKS* (1932), but the film was too controversial and MGM never trusted him afterwards. After the lukewarm reception of his last film, *MIRACLES FOR SALE* in 1939, Browning lived in obscurity, drinking heavily and watching old movies until his death in 1962. Friendless, he willed his 1941 Chrysler to his mailman.

### EYEBALL EATERS UNITE

**Q:** Who directed the 1934 b/w film *MANIAC*? Need a hint? He and his scriptwriter wife were also responsible for the cultish exploitation films *MARIJUANA*, *WEED WITH ROOTS IN HELL* and the unforgettable *HOW TO UNDRESS IN FRONT OF YOUR HUSBAND*.

**A:** Also serving as producer, Dwain Esper (1893-1982) directed *MANIAC*, an unqualified candidate for the list of "Strangest Films Ever Made." Bill Woods starred as Maxwell, the psychotic lab assistant of Dr. Meirschultz, played by Horace Carpenter. After knocking off the doctor, Maxwell uses his former vaudevilian make-up talents to impersonate him for the rest of the movie. Playing doctor was never so strange. You get to see the deranged Maxwell inject unsuspecting patients with unnatural fluids, pop the eyes out of a cat, then pop them into his mouth, a hair-pulling, skirt-rendering "cat fight" between two crazed women in a cellar, some early frontal nudity, and even a violent but shadowy rape sequence. Heavy stuff for 1934...



**PHOTO #9:** This eight-foot, six-inch giant, weighing 450 pounds, made his motion picture debut for Columbia in this 1953 monster film. Name the movie and the man beneath Clay Campbell's makeup.



**PHOTO #10:** We all know Gort from *THE* stood still inside the suit?

### CAUTIOUS CLAY CHAMP

**Q:** Before there was Kermit, or even the Pillsbury Doughboy, there was a lovable little green guy with an oddly shaped head—*Gumby*. Generations of youngsters who have seen him in his own episodic adventures have adopted *Gumby* as their own, but on what early TV show did *Gumby* appear for the very first time?

**A:** Say, Kids! It's *The How-w-u-wedy Doody Show*! Initially, *Gumby* had his own five minute slot, but Art Clokey's clay brainchild found it easy being green and went on to star in his own series in 1956. (The next issue of *FILMFAX* will feature a revealing and candid interview with Clokey that you won't want to miss.)

*Gumby* was seen on NBC on Saturday mornings. The premiere program debuted in March of 1957 but was cancelled just a few months later in November. The show was then hosted by Bob Nicholson, who played Scotty McKee. Pinky Lee was also featured on the series but since *Gumby* was produced in New York and Pinky's own show was out of Los Angeles, it meant a lot of commuting. Pinky was able to endure this grinding schedule for 13 weeks before finally collapsing in front of the cameras.

### MASHER MEETS MUNCHER

**Q:** Considered by some to be one of the more serious contenders for the coveted "Worst of the Worst Award," this 1968 SF/horror concoction starred two unforgettable pros in regrettably forgettable roles: John Carradine and Wendell Corey (his last film). Among its other unredeeming qualities this big-screen mishmash boasted TV's Mr. M.A.S.H., Wayne Rogers, as one of its co-scripters. Name the film.

**A:** Starring John Carradine as a mad doctor who makes body-ripping zombies in his basement, and



AY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, but who

Wendell Corey (who died shortly after filming) as the CIA chief investigating the case, *THE ASTRO-ZOMBIES* (Gemini, 90 mins., color), sports this dubious distinction. Also in the cast were the ex-stripper Santana (star of *FASTER PUSSYCAT! KILL! KILL!*), Rafael Campos and Wally Moon. Wayne Rogers co-wrote the script with Ted V. Mikels, whose other equally nauseating credits include *THE CORPSE GRINDERS* (director) and *THE WORM EATERS* (producer).

## TV's FIRST COSMIC COP

**Q:** The hero of live television's very first science fiction program was the self-proclaimed "Guardian of the Universe." Not a small task considering the extremely low budget, but he effectively managed to police the planets for almost six years, with a little help from his friends. Who was this legendary space hero, and what are the names of the two men who, respectively, played him?



PHOTO #11: They were much more mysterious on-screen than off. Name the maiden and the monster.

**A:** In the early 1950s, kids all over the country were glued to their new television sets between 7:00 and 7:30 every day for the thrilling adventures of none other than *Captain Video and his Video Rangers*. Operating out of his mountaintop headquarters, Captain Video faced a host of adversaries such as Nargola (Ernest Borgnine) and Mook the Moon Man. But with the aid of his young Video Ranger (Don Hastings) the Captain was able to thwart their evil plans including those of the dastardly Dr. Pauli (Hal Conklin).

Captain Video was portrayed by two actors. When the program debuted in June of 1949, Richard Coogan was the star. In 1950, however, Al Hodge took over and remained with the series until its cancellation in April of 1955. Unfortunately, Hodge was unable to find work after *Captain Video* left the air, and in 1979 he died penniless in a New York City hotel.

## DID I REALLY SAY THAT?

**Q:** Over the years, pseudo-scientific double-talk has provided a film-fans with some memorable moments in the history of malapropiate nonsense. Who said, "I meshed my LPI with the viewscreen auditor, and picked up a count of five . . ." If you think you understand that line, immediately seek professional help and/or write a letter of apology to Isaac Asimov.

**A:** Ro-man, played by George Barrows, uttered that immortal monologue in *ROBOT MONSTER* (1953, Astor, 8-D(?), 65 mins., b/w).

*ROBOT MONSTER* was shot in Hollywood's Bronson Canyon in four days for under \$20,000 and, according to Bill Warren in his book *Keep Watching the Skies* (Vol. 1, McFarland), "*ROBOT MONSTER* may be the only film so bad it drove its director to attempt suicide."

Director Phil Tucker (*THE CAPE CANAVERAL MONSTERS*) really didn't have much to work with, given Wyatt Ordung's script, but his direction was still terrible. After the film was completed, the relationship between Tucker and the film's backers hit such an all-time low that he wasn't even allowed to see the final cut. Reportedly, he had to buy a ticket to see his own film at a local theater. After viewing *ROBOT MONSTER* on the screen, the extremely depressed director wrote a letter of apology, mailed it to the local newspapers, then unsuccessfully tried to take his own life. Tucker was given few directorial assignments afterward.

## WOMAN MAKES MONSTER

**Q:** Actor Mel Welles is probably best known for his role as Gravis Mushnik in Roger Corman's horror-cultural camp classic *THE LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* (1960). Welles' other acting credits also include *ATTACK OF THE CRAB MONSTERS* (1957), *THE UNDEAD* (1965) and *THE REVENGE OF THE BLOOD BEAST* (1966). Twice, however, Welles tested his talents on the other side of the camera as a director. What are the names of those two films?

**A:** In 1966 Welles directed *MAN-EATER OF HYDRA* (aka *ISLAND OF THE DOOMED*, Allied Artists) starring one of the fading kings of the "B" movies, Cameron Mitchell. As the bankers botanist, Baron Von Weser, Mitchell creates a blood-sucking plant which at least equals the famous talking "Audrey" of *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS*. Only this one is a vampire tree. (Plants of a feather? Ruby-throated sap-suckers?) The film also featured Elisa Montes and George Martin.

Welles' second film was *LADY FRANKENSTEIN* (New World, 1972) and starred another fallen veteran, Joseph Cotton, as the infamous Dr. Frankenstein. Unfortunately, the good doctor dies early in the picture, leaving his daughter (Sarah Bay) to carry on his work—but for a somewhat different reason: "Only the monster she made could satisfy her strange desires!" read the ad copy. And with Mickey Hargitay (body-builder husband of Jayne Mansfield) as her "loving" monster, what more could a girl ask for? Paul Muller, Paul Whiteman and Herman Fox also appear in the Italian-produced adaptation of Bill Warren's comic magazine story, "*For the Love of Frankenstein*." ★

That's all for now, but be sure to check back into *TRIVIA TRIX* next issue when we feature more "obscure-but-interesting" information from the back drawers of our *FILMFAX* archives. (For photo quiz answers consult page 62.) See you next time.



**WHATEVER BECAME OF...? Ninth Series** by Richard Lamparski, Crown Publishers, Inc., paperback, 205 pages, \$9.95

At one time or another most people ponder the "big" questions: What is the meaning of life? Why am I here? And what is life all about anyway? Filmfans and trivia buffs labor with equal zeal, over a decidedly different interrogative. For them the \$64,000 question is "Whatever became of...?" and author Richard Lamparski has taken it upon himself to provide an answer.

The *Whatever Became Of...? Ninth Series*, profiles one hundred personalities from television series, documentaries and, of course, the movies. The 200 black and white "then and now" photographs, some taken by the author himself, are fun, but Lamparski's in-depth interviews and the candid comments he often received from people who have been abandoned by the entertainment industry, are the most revealing.

Remember Jackie Moran, child actor of the late 30s and 40s? He made more than 30 features including the BUCK ROGERS serial in 1939 with late Buster Crabbe, *GONE WITH THE WIND* (1939), *SINCE YOU WENT AWAY* (1944) and *BETTY CO-ED* (1947), which was his last film. Until 1982, Moran had been in the wholesale and retail liquor business, but abandoned that career because of alcoholism. Since then, the former actor has "sold newspaper, hot dogs, taken bets for a bookie, and worked at a detoxification center. He concluded his first interview in more than thirty-five years (with Lamparski) by saying, "My life is all backwards. I'll never make the kind of money I did as a kid which makes appear to myself as a failure as an adult." Hollywood again exacts its toll for stardom...

But the harvest isn't always bitter



**Richard Webb (aka Captain Midnight)** flashes a familiar smile, seemingly undaunted by the years.

fruit. "Sunshine Sammy" Morrison was the first black child movie star, appearing in twenty-eight silent Our Gang comedies. He was also the first black movie personality to be featured in a movie magazine and reportedly the first black actor to become a millionaire. Of his life today he says, "My family is close and very loving with each other. I have good health and I drive a Continental Mark IV. I fall asleep every night of my life counting my many, many blessings."

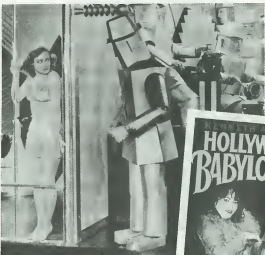
*Whatever Became Of...? #9* also traces the careers of Richard Webb (*Captain Midnight*), Johnny Eck

**HOLLYWOOD BABYLON II** by Kenneth Anger, New American Library, paperback, 331 pages, \$12.95

Take a look at any newsstand or grocery check-out counter. Gossip is a very profitable business. Most is relatively harmless; some is malicious, but John and Jane Q. Public gobble both with equal relish. The most tantalizing tidbits are those that concern the population of Hollywood—namely the actors and actresses, both then and now. They are the ones whom we openly admire but secretly admonish. There is a price for stardom and we want to be around when the gods and goddesses can't pay their bills. Tragically, that is often the case.

*Hollywood Babylon II* by Kenneth Anger has been called "a steamy book," "gossip with the gloves off," a book which "outrashes the original (*Hollywood Babylon*) in gossip, gore and grossness," and "morbidly fascinating." That about sums it up.

Want specifics? (1) Alfred Hitchcock was a scopophilic and once Grace Kel-



A young and somewhat scantily-clad Joan Crawford supplies a little cheesecake for the peeping tin-man next door. (Note the "fedorated robots" which also appeared in numerous films including *RADIO RANCH* with Gene Autry and *CAPTAIN VIDEO, MASTER OF THE STRATOSPHERE* with Judd Hologren.



(FREAKS), Ricahrd Eyer (THE INVISIBLE BOY) and a host of others near and dear to "depression babies and baby boomers everywhere!" It's easy to see why Lamparski's books sell so well. They are like meeting up with old friends.

*Whatever Became Of . . . ?* #9 is lots of fun and informative but it does have one drawback. It's like peanuts. You'll want more. Well, there are eight others in the series, so go ahead and indulge. If Lamparski doesn't have the answer yet to your particular Whatever became of question, odds are he soon will.

— Sharon Williams

ley humored her director/master by stripping for him while he watched through a telescope a mile away. (2) It's rumored Loretta Young had a child by Clark Gable. (3) James Dean was gay. (4) Lupe Velez, the Mexican Spitfire, "died with her head in a toilet." Got the idea? No one is sacred.

The author, Mr. Anger, was child actor in the Hollywood of the 1930s and there is an underlying love of the industry in his narrative. *Hollywood Babylon II* is interesting reading, albeit bizarre, but considering the subject matter, the author does maintain at least an adequate balance between reporting and voyeurism. The pictures alone, however, are worth the price of the book. Most are rare, unseen, behind-closed-doors (and sometimes behind bars) shots, equally as revealing as the spicy text.

If you're titillated by reading and seeing the great or the near-great with their pants down (literally), then the *Hollywood Babylon* series is for you. It's a morbidly fascinating book. Maybe like Alfred Hitchcock, there is a little of the scopophilia in us all.

— Sharon Williams

**THE MOVIE LOVER'S GUIDE TO HOLLYWOOD** by Richard Allenman, Harper & Row, Publishers, paperback, 326 pages, \$12.95

Every year thousands of people visit Hollywood and never see it. The problem is that they don't really know where to look. But take heart, filmfans, now there is an armchair tour book guaranteed to satisfy all your needs. Recently published, *The Movie Lover's Guide to Hollywood* by Richard Allenman is a delightful cross between the National Enquirer and an AAA travel brochure. Allenman notes that many visitors "who travel to Los Angeles looking for the Hollywood of their fantasies go home disappointed. A couple of hours spent on the Universal Studios tour, a few minutes checking out the footprints in front of the Chinese Theater on Hollywood Boulevard—that, for most visitors, is Hollywood." There is, however, a great deal more to see, explains Allenman—"not just within the boundaries of Hollywood proper, but in all of the many communities that together make up the city of L.A."

*The Movie Lover's Guide to Hollywood* is divided into thirteen sections, each a specific L.A. geographic area. There are numerous handy maps with numbers indicating all important locations, wonderful vintage photos, hints on the best way to see a site, addresses, historical notes, architectural descriptions and even some juicy gossip. In fact, you don't even have to go to Hollywood to enjoy this book.

Some of the sites that Allenman points out aren't really historical but just worthy of attention. For example, even the interior of the McDonalds Restaurant at 1411 North Vine Street has gone Hollywood: "A veritable shrine to the film CASABLANCA, this fast-food parlor is all done up with wicker chairs and stools, louvered panels, potted palms, Moorish columns, and, of course, ceiling fans. If that isn't enough, there's even a duplicate of the famous 'Rick's Cafe Americain' sign that hung outside Humphrey Bogart's fabled club in the 1943 Warner Brothers classic."

The locations of actual historical sites, however, are the main attraction of *The Movie Lover's Guide to Hollywood*. Topping the list is the Hollywood Studio Museum at 2300 North Highland Avenue. This unpretentious structure is the horse barn where Cecil B. DeMille directed *THE SQUAW MAN*, considered to be the first feature ever shot in the town of Hollywood. Or the intersection of Beechwood and Belden, immortalized by a frantic Kevin McCarthy in the original *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*. Or the



Comedian Harold Lloyd over downtown Los Angeles in *Safety Last*, 1923

corner of Gower Street and Melrose Avenue, site of RKO Studios, currently owned by Paramount Pictures. And of course, there is Paramount itself, the legendary wrought-iron gate at 5451 Marathon Street made famous in *SUNSET BOULEVARD*. I'm ready for my close-up, Mr. DeMille . . . How's that for history?

*The Movie Lover's Guide to Hollywood* is an absolute necessity for visitors to that tantalizing timeslot because, explains Allenman, "the vestiges of L.A.'s movie past are not always easy to find nor instantly recognizable. They're there, though: historic studios of the silent-picture era, lavish 1920s movies palaces, secret locations of some of the world's most famous films. The trick is knowing what to look for. I hope that *The Movie Lover's Guide to Hollywood* can help uncover the hidden Hollywood that's been lurking between today's parking lots and high rises.

"Lights, camera, action—and drive carefully!"

— Sharon Williams

**THE MOVIE PRODUCER** by Paul N. Lazarus II, Harper & Row, Publishers, paperback, \$6.95

Producers are like toilets: they're there when needed; in an emergency they are indispensable; when they don't work well, there can be one god-awful mess; and both take a lot of shit. While directors and actors get the attention and sometimes the glory, the producer remains a rather faceless entity, at

(Continued on page 54)



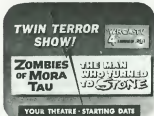
**ZOMBIES OF MORA TAU** (1997) stars Gregg Palmer, Allison Hayes. 68 minutes. From RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video.

More than likely **ZOMBIES OF MORA TAU** was chosen for video release over the many other yet-unavailable Columbia horror films by way of the "eeny meeny" process, but I'd like to think that there's an executive over at Columbia Home Video who rightly recognized it as one of the most effective yet least appreciated of the Sam Katzman shoe-stringers.

Diver Gregg Palmer, entrepreneur Joel Ashley and Ashley's wife Allison Hayes head a salvage expedition seeking to recover a billion dollar cache of sunken diamonds off the coast of Africa. Withered Marjorie Eaton, owner of an estate on the mainland, warns that a corps of ten white zombies guards the ancient treasure, and she shows the newcomers the graves of the many fortune hunters who have come before. Open graves await this newest party as well, and more than a few are filled within the 68 minute running time.

**ZOMBIES** has the impoverished look of most every Sam Katzman film, and there are several scenes ruined by cheap mounting and corner-cutting. But Raymond Marcus' screenplay is gleefully old-fashioned and unrestrained, and director Edward Cahn often manages

to overcome budget restrictions and catch just the right feel of creepy menace. Former Universal-International contract player Palmer, scream queen Hayes and one-time Chicago model Autumn Russell capably handle the



leading roles, with colorful character support from Eaton. Also on hand are Katzman semi-regulars Morris Ankrum, Gene Roth and "Killer" Karl Davis. **ZOMBIES OF MORA TAU** was easily the best zombie film of its era, and it holds up well today. If '50s horror's your bag, it's well worth owning.

*Photos: Top left, an original ad matte from the **ZOMBIES OF MORA TAU**. Above a suggested "teletop" or early TV display card for a double bill with **THE MAN WHO TURNED TO STONE**.*

**RETURN OF THE FLY** (1959) stars Vincent Price, Brett Halsey. 78 minutes. From Key Video.

Best-known for his work in comedy, writer/director Edward L. Bernds tried his hand at science-fiction in the '50s with good results in such films as **WORLD WITHOUT END**, **SPACE MASTER X-7**—and this unimaginatively titled, but highly serviceable sequel to Kurt Neumann's **THE FLY**.

We're all familiar with what happened to David Hedison in **THE FLY** in 1958. **RETURN** is set twenty-odd years later—in 1959. Brett Halsey, Hedison's now-grown son, is single-mindedly determined to resume work on the matter transmitting device which turned his father into a molecular mix-up of man and fly. Aided by his uncle Vincent Price, Halsey re-constructs the apparatus and toils to perfect the process. But lab assistant David Frankham, a wanted killer waiting to steal the machine's secrets, has other plans. Halsey gets wise, the two men fight, Frankham stashes Halsey in the matter transmitter, and . . . like father, like son. **RETURN OF THE FLY** is perfunctory in its plotting, and there isn't anything in it that compares with the unsettling spider-web climax of the original. But

the pace is brisker and there's more emphasis on incident. And **RETURN** has the advantage of a seven-foot-tall crea-



ture (played by stand-in Ed COLLOSUS OF NEW YORK Wolff) who has somewhat more to do than David Hedison's masked, mopey, stay-at-home-type Fly. There's nothing spectacular about **RETURN OF THE FLY**—in fact, it is pretty standard monster-on-the-loose fare—but an attractive cast, slick production and some gruesome highlights make for a good old-fashioned horror show.

**COSMIC MONSTER** (1958) Stars Forrest Tucker, Gaby Andre. 75 minutes. from V.C.I.

It's an unfortunate fact of life for video collectors of '50s SF films, that the only titles still eluding them at this point are hardly worth the trouble of tracking down. After several years at the top of these completists' Most Wanted Lists, **COSMIC MONSTER** is finally out on pre-record from V.C.I. And guess what? It's every bit as talky, gawky and repellent as we all remember it from the long-ago, pre-V.C.R. days when it used to run on regular TV. A British-made SF show, **COSMIC MONSTER** (released in England as **THE STRANGE WORLD OF PLANET X**) had its roots in a novel by actress Rene Ray and a BBC-TV serial.

Researchers experimenting with magnetic fields inadvertently expose a wooded area near their lab to dangerous cosmic rays. Said rays turn a sleepy hobo into a burn-faced killer and cause insects to grow to huge proportions. Mix in a demented scientist, a solicit-

*Photo: Above, Kurt Neuman's **RETURN OF THE FLY** featured moments of buzzing horror, such as a seven-foot-tall "Son of the Fly," played by Ed Wolff.*

**SUDDENLY** (1954) stars Frank Sinatra, Christopher Dark, Paul Frees, James Gleason. 77 minutes. From Continental.

Frank Sinatra entered the decade of the '50s with his star clearly on the wane: his movie career had been sabotaged by poor titles like *THE KISSING BANDIT* and *DOUBLE DYNAMITE*; his records were not selling as they did in happier days; a live-from-New York TV series failed to attract a sufficient audience. But in 1953 he pulled himself up by the bootstraps, plugging for the meaty role of Maggio in *FROM HERE TO ETERNITY*, winning it and earning a Best Supporting Actor Oscar for a first-rate dramatic performance. Sinatra has not seen the shady side of the limelight since, and he has tested (and proven) his dramatic mettle on several other occasions.

After fifteen years of suppression, his first such film (post-*ETERNITY*) is now available from Continental Video. *SUDDENLY* stars Sinatra as a gun-happy ex-G.I. hired to assassinate the President of the United States when the chief exec arrives by special train in the small Sierras town of Suddenly (hence the title), California. Together with associates Christopher Dark and Paul Frees, Sinatra invades a home overlooking the railroad station, making hostages of war widow Nancy Gates, her



Frank Sinatra points the way in this scene from the intensely directed thriller *SUDDENLY* (1954) in which Sinatra played a would-be presidential assassin.

father-in-law James Gleason, her young son (Kim Charney) and her suitor, local lawman Sterling Hayden. Tension mounts as the President's arrival time looms closer and Hayden probes for hidden weaknesses in Sinatra's psychotic personality.

The entire story takes place within the span of a few hours and its second-half action is largely confined to the one house, but through capable handling director Lewis Allen is able to avoid the usual pitfall of such films and does not allow the proceedings to take on a stagey feel; after some sluggish preliminaries that introduce the main characters and plant the seeds for a predictable climax, director Allen main-

tains interest (if not genuine suspense) throughout. *SUDDENLY* is not a great film; as a crime film it's outdistanced by the quite-similar *THE DESPERATE HOURS*, and as a political assassination picture it's a pale shadow of Sinatra's later *THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE*. Its unusual theme and the novelty of a psychotic Sinatra are the drawing cards for an interesting but otherwise unexceptional film. It's definitely worth a look—it's a must-see for Sinatra fans—but it is not a film that cries out for repeated viewings. Our advice is to rent before you decide whether to buy. Transfer quality is quite good, but there are some abrupt jumps due to splices in the original print.

ous spaceman, a less-than-lively Forrest Tucker and the usual lot of boring brigadiers and balding bureaucrats and you have the recipe for a tape not worth owning. *COSMIC MONSTER* is notable for having enough fantasy elements for four SF epics, and botching the possibilities in each within a single 75 minute film. The "big bug" effects are non-too-special, and there are a few gory highpoints that are crudely executed and in bad taste. French actress Gaby Andre is the femme lead, Alec Mango is the mad doctor and Martin Benson is the spaceman. Transfer quality is excellent and so is the original print, which bears the British title despite the *COSMIC MONSTER* packaging. Emblematic of the type of '50s titles still unobtainable in video, this one might just as well have stayed rare.

**SWAMP DIAMONDS** (original title: *SWAMP WOMEN*) (1956) stars Marie Windsor, Carole Mathews. 70 minutes.

This obscure Roger Corman film remained for many years the most elusive of the director's early credits. It hinges its shallow story on that favorite Roger/Gene Corman gimmick of having women play male-dominated roles to give familiar premise novel a presen-



Photo: Above, the ad card for *COSMIC MONSTERS* pretty much tells the story for this version of "Little Miss Muffit vs. the Mutants."

tation. Shot on location in New Orleans and surrounding Louisiana bayou, the film stars Carole Mathews as a policewoman who goes to women's prison posing as a convict in order to infiltrate the Nardo Gang (Marie Windsor, Beverly Garland, Jil Jarmyn), a trio of hard-case gun molls who have hidden stolen diamonds somewhere on The Outside. Mathews engineers a jailbreak for the Nardo gals and herself in hopes of being led to the gems. The balance of the film is set in the Great Outdoors of Louisiana where the foursome begin a swampland trek fraught with the usual movie perils, making hostages of geologist Touch (Michael Connors) and his girlfriend Susan Cummings, and fighting amongst themselves as they close in on the diamonds.

*SWAMP DIAMONDS* is fairly routine in every regard; Corman's direction is uninspired; technically, the film is often mediocre to poor. And the premise of police allowing convicts to escape hoping to recover stolen diamonds—a stratagem that results in three deaths—seems quite unlikely right from the start. The picture's charm is supplied by its colorful cast and offbeat approach. Essaying the type of brassy,

(Continued on page 56)

## Observations on His early years At AIP with Roger Corman

Article and Interview  
by SHARON WILLIAMS

Dick Miller has starred or co-starred in many of the 80 plus films to his credit. But in 1957 he unfortunately missed out on what could have been the "Biggest" role of his career.

Jim Nicolson, minor-movie mogul (a.k.a. President of American International Pictures), had read a 1920s short story titled "The Nth Man" and decided it would make a terrific film. Universal had released *THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN* in April and that film had been an unqualified success at the box office. True to form, and knowing a good idea when they saw one, AIP moved to hop on the energy-scare bandwagon. But their hero would nibble from the other side of the atomic mushroom.

The story was about a man two miles tall who played G.I. Joe with real G.I.s, sank destroyers with a flick of his finger and then dined on smoked whale prepared over a live volcano. Bert I. Gordon was tagged as the director and Chuck Griffith began work on the screenplay—with Dick Miller tentatively in mind as the film's "big" star. Chuck, however, couldn't handle Bert's back seat scripting and the job fell to Mark Hanna who wrote a slightly more conventional story. And there were a couple of other changes. The film was released later that year starring Glenn Langan and newly titled *THE AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN*.

Although Miller didn't get his chance to trash Las Vegas or stick it to the General with a hypo, he has done something that few other actors of that era (including Langan) have managed to do. Miller survived. He has become a highly respected and recognized character actor in both film and television. The key to that success is that Miller firmly believes the old Hollywood adage that, "There are no small parts; only small actors." In that respect, Dick Miller is a big man. He knows how to make a moment work.

*SHARON WILLIAMS is a freelance writer and editor based in the Chicago area. She is a regular contributor to national media magazines such as FANTASY FILMS, PRIME TIME (Canada), MOVIELAND, and MONSTERLAND.*

## An Interview with **DICK MILLER**

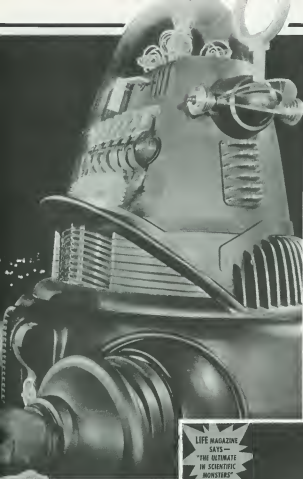


Miller spent the first 22 years of his life, beginning Christmas day of 1928, in the Bronx. Starting early to follow his own star, Miller aspired to a musical career, but in 1952 he decided to follow his friend and occasional drinking buddy from the Bird in Hand Restaurant, Jonathan Haze, to California and try his hand at writing. Haze had met Roger Corman and already had been in a couple of AIP films (*FIVE GUNS WEST*, *FAST AND FURIOUS*). When Haze introduced Miller to Corman, however, the director wasn't looking for writers. He needed actors...

**FAX:** What was your first role in motion pictures?

**MILLER:** My first film was a picture I did for Roger Corman called *APACHE WOMAN* in 1954 with Lloyd Bridges. I signed on as fifth Indian but I wound up as the lead killer by the time the film was over. Everytime somebody had to be shot Roger would say, "Let Dick shoot him 'cause he's closer." Or, "You're taking care of the horses and there's no way we can explain your coming over here, so let Dick shoot him." I wound up killing everyone in the picture! At the end of a week Corman says, "Would you like to come back and play a cowboy?" "Makin' another movie?" I asked. "No, same picture," says Corman. "You'll work





*Photos: Center, veteran actor Dick Miller, as a Hollywood talent agent, toasts Robbie the Robot at a cocktail party in the 1976 Joe Dante/Alan Arkush self-satire, HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD. Bottom right, 1957 lobby card from Roger Corman's WAR OF THE SATELLITES illustrates Dick Miller in the fatal clutch of alien menace, Richard Devon.*

extrodinaire of **ROBOT MONSTER** (1953) and later **THE FIRST MAN INTO SPACE** (1959). Ordung later served as assistant director on **THE NAVY VS THE NIGHT MONSTERS** (1966).

**WAR OF THE SATELLITES**, produced and directed by Corman for Allied Artists in 1957, starred Miller as the astronaut hero, Dave Boyer. Taking only eight days to complete, **WAR OF THE SATELLITES** was pushed into theaters two months after the Russians had launched Sputnik I.]

He went into westerns because he found out all he needed was a couple of horses. Then he went back into science fiction. That's where it all started. Monster pictures, **WAR OF THE SATELLITES**.

**FAX:** That was in 1957 but weren't you also in **THE UNDEAD** and **IT CONQUERED THE WORLD** the year before?

**MILLER:** Right, and then came **NOT OF THIS EARTH**.

[**IT CONQUERED THE WORLD** was one of Corman's better quickies (10 days to shoot). Miller played Sgt. Niel, the leader of the soldiers who arrive at the venusian's hide-out just as Tom

next week as a cowboy." So I did a cowboy and an Indian in my first film. Almost wound up killing myself in the final scene. True story.

**FAX:** Then Corman seemed to move away from westerns for awhile and jumped into the science fiction/horror film business.

**MILLER:** I did a number of westerns for him, all about the same type and size, and then he started into science fiction. Actually, he really started in science fiction before I went to work for him—some undersca monster picture.

[In 1954 Roger Corman produced his first film, **THE MONSTER FROM THE OCEAN FLOOR** for \$12,000. The six-day b/w production was directed by Wyatt Ordung, screenwriter



Photos: Left to right, Dick Miller shows his latest "work of art" to Anthony Carbone in the 1959 Roger Corman film, *A BUCKET OF BLOOD*. Boris Karloff contributes to the numerous beatings received by Miller during the course of events (or lack of them) in *THE TERROR*. Not wanting to miss his turn at the whipping block, a young Jack Nicholson continues to Terror-ize poor Dick Miller in the movie of the same name.

Anderson's (Lee Van Cleef) wife (Beverly Garland) shoots at the creature. Peter Graves also starred as Tom's friend, Paul Nelson. Jonathan Haze, later the star of *THE LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS*, plays one of the soldiers, Private Manuel Ortiz.

Corman was both producer and director for the Allied Artists b/w release, *NOT OF THIS EARTH*. Miller and Haze (as the chauffeur) contributed the humor. The film was originally released on a double bill with *ATTACK OF THE CRAB MONSTERS*.

**FAX:** *NOT OF THIS EARTH* was a turning point for you, of sorts. While your character, Joe Piper, was only in two scenes, he made an indelible impression on the audience.

**MILLER:** *NOT OF THIS EARTH* was the first piece of comedy that Roger Corman had ever seen me do on film. He couldn't understand what I was doing. He saw this vacuum cleaner salesman as a guy with a bow-tie and forty pencils sticking out of his pocket. I had sold different things for years and dressed in black jackets and shirts the way I've always dressed. This is the way people sell. You don't take a course in selling vacuum cleaners. When I started singing in the basement when we were filming, Corman yelled—"What are you doing?!" I was doing Jackie Gleason. "Oh, that's interesting," he says. And that about sums up the basis of my relationship with Roger. Every-

thing I did he would say, "Oh, that's interesting . . ."

**FAX:** Some of today's finest directors (Joe Dante, Francis Ford Coppola, Peter Bogdanovich, Martin Scorsese) cut their movie teeth under Roger, yet there seems to be a love/hate relationship between Corman and the people who movie, have worked for him.

**MILLER:** That's exactly right. It is a love/hate relationship. I've probably never been so bugged at somebody in my life as I have with him, but at the same time I've never been so happy with a relationship. I think this is what most people find. He gave us, writers, directors and actors, the freedom to work and a chance to develop. For instance, this town loves to type you. I mean, if you play a gangster, or a cowboy or whatever it is, you never do anything else the rest of your life unless you're able to become a leading man. From the very beginning Roger has always let me do anything I wanted. I did 20 different parts in 20 different pictures and no two of them were alike. The first picture I ever did I played a cowboy and an Indian. From there I was an astronaut. The next time I'd play a psycho killer and then maybe do some comedy after that. There was no typecasting. Not many actors get the opportunity to do everything, but he let me do it. He had his faults, though. He was about as cheap a man as I have ever met in my life. But at the same time he



was a brilliant businessman. he never studied cinematography. He went to Stanford and took a business course and he's made it pay off every since. No one has ever used their education so well.

[Mark Thomas McGee relates an appropriate description of Roger Corman in his book *FAST AND FURIOUS* (McFarland, 1984)—"It came to be said of him (Corman) that he could produce a film in a phone booth for the price of a call to New York and complete the shooting before his three minutes were up."]

**FAX:** He made great \$10 million pictures for less than \$100,000.

**MILLER:** He sure did. He was in an era with guys like Katzman who also made the same type of cheap movies.

[Volumes could be written about producer Sam Katzman (1901-1973) but here are a few of his credits to jar your





memory: *SPOOKS RUN WILD* (1941), *ATOM MAN VS. SUPERMAN* (1950), *CAPTAIN VIDEO* (1951), *JUNGLE JIM IN THE FORBIDDEN LAND* (1951), *THE CREATURE WITH THE ATOM BRAIN* (1953), *IT CAME FROM BENEATH THE SEA* (1955), *EARTH VS. THE FLYING SAUCERS* (1957).]

Their attitude was we're making a cheap but actors don't cost anything. You can get the best for the same price as you can get for the worst. Scripts are the same thing. Roger would start off with good properties and good people. The films only suffered production wise. They were good pictures and except for the production value, they would stand up against anything.

**FAX:** Many of those films were also produced in just a few days.

**MILLER:** We did a bunch of five and six-day pictures. *A BUCKET OF BLOOD* was done in five days. *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS*, of course,

is the classic done in two and a half days and it has never been off the market. *A BUCKET OF BLOOD* took a little longer and it never made the noise that *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* did, but it's probably the biggest underground cult movie ever made. Of course, every picture made they say is a cult film. If it's a year old and it didn't do any business, it's a cult film. Oh, where's it playing? We're going to show it on some college campus. That'll make it a cult film. I believe *A BUCKET OF BLOOD* is truly the cult film of all cult films. It ranks with some of the great classics of the silent era. Very, very few films are in every film museum in the world. *A BUCKET OF BLOOD* is.

[*A BUCKET OF BLOOD* (1959) was the *EASY RIDER* of the 50s. It reflected an era. Instead of motorcycles, hippies and Steppenwolf, there is a coffeehouse, beatniks and jazz (scored by Fred Katz). Miller stars in a role that fits him like plaster over a dead cat. Similar to *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS*, the film is a horror comedy classic. The cast included Barbara Morris, Anthony Carbone, Ed Nelson and (believe it or not) Bert Convy.

If you haven't seen *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS* (1960) you are not doubt new to this galaxy; 70 minutes of botanical buffoonery.]

*A BUCKET OF BLOOD* was also a picture that suffered because of lack of money. If they had had anything—even another \$20-25,000—it would have changed the picture. They just ran out of money towards the end. That's what happened.

**FAX:** *A BUCKET OF BLOOD* was the first film in which you played Walter Paisely, but there have been several reprisals since then.

**MILLER:** I've played Walter five times now, I think. I've lost track. There was *A BUCKET OF BLOOD*, *HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD* and *THE HOWLING*. In *TWILIGHT ZONE: THE MOVIE* there's a sign in the back of the restaurant that says "Walter Paisely, Proprietor." I played a night watchman in Allan Arkush's film, *HEART-BEETS* and I'm wearing a name tag that says Walter Paisely. I don't remember if it said the whole name or just Paisely.

**FAX:** Ever consider changing your name?

**MILLER:** Yes, but not to Walter Paisely.

**FAX:** Are you a fan of science fiction and horror movies?

**MILLER:** Oh, ya. The first two movies I ever saw in my life were *FRANKENSTEIN* and *KING KONG*. I was about two and a half or three years old when they came out and my mother took me to see them. They must have shaped me because I can't get away from it. I do play in other kinds of films, but I keep going back to them. I love it. I'm a very heavy science fiction reader or at least I used to be. I started reading when I was about ten years old and in the next 20 years or so I guess I read just about everything that was good. Today most of the books are just adventure stories with rocket ships so I don't read it much anymore.

But I remember the feeling I got the first time I ever did a science fiction film. Up to that point I had been doing westerns and adventure things. Then all of a sudden along comes *NOT OF THIS EARTH* and the rest of them. I said, gee, this is the stuff I've read about all my life. This is the field I've always wanted to be in. I think the biggest



Photos: Bottom, left to right, psycho sculptor Dick Miller (playing a character called Walter Paisely for the first time) accepts an unexpected kiss from beatnik groupie Barbara Morris in the black comedy *A BUCKET OF BLOOD*. Dick Miller watches as Russell Johnson levels his "piece" at an offscreen target in Corman's 1956 rock and roll ruckus, *ROCK ALL NIGHT*. (Photos courtesy of AIP.)

thrill I've had in the business was doing **THE TERROR** with Boris Karloff.

**FAX:** He was a very special actor.

**MILLER:** I love him. He was a beautiful man. We became quick friends on the picture although we only knew each other for three days. I saw him again on two or three of his subsequent visits to the United States. We'd meet, have a cup of coffee and spend an hour just talking. What a thrill. That was like meeting Superman in person.

**FAX:** Filming **THE TERROR** was a bit unusual, even for a Roger Corman picture.

**MILLER:** One of the funniest films I've ever made and also the weirdest story I've ever heard of in the making of a movie. Roger had finished a picture, one of the Poe films, I forget which, and had Boris Karloff at the studio. So he tells him, if you stay three days and shoot I'll give you so much extra money. He also literally stopped them from tearing down the sets.

[The Corman "Poe" film referred to here was **THE RAVEN** which starred Karloff, Vincent Price and Peter Lorre. This was Karloff's first film under contract to American International Pictures. Corman directed.]

We shot totally unrelated scenes for three days. There wasn't any story. Roger just had Leo Gordon (**KONGO**, 1952; **THE WASP WOMAN** 1959; **ATTACK OF THE GIANT LEECHES**, 1959; **TOWER OF LONDON**, 1962) write some scenes. He said just write some castle scenes for Boris. They don't have to have any story behind it, just allow plot lines. Hey, we'll put a story together later. And that's exactly what we did. We got these pages, learned them, then shot for the next three days before they tore the set down. That was the end of it, I thought. Three or four months later Roger says, we're going to make that movie. Totally in the dark, I said "What movie?" The thing you shot with Boris Karloff, he says. We have a script now. They tied all these unrelated scenes together with this dumb story.

**FAX:** Weren't there about five different people writing and directing **THE TERROR**, including Francis Ford Coppola?

**MILLER:** Francis came up and not only wrote some stuff but he directed us on location as well. We went up to Big Sur for a couple of weeks. I don't know if that was his first or second film or what. Jack Hill also wrote and directed some of it. It was a real hodgepodge.

[Jack Hill was both a director and a screen writer. Following **THE TERROR**, Hill wrote and directed **SPIDER BABY** a.k.a. **THE LIVER EATERS**, **CANNIBAL ORGY OR THE MAD-**

**DEST STORY EVER TOLD**, starring Lon Chaney, Jr. in 1964. In 1966 Hill produced, wrote and directed (for awhile) **BLOOD BATH**. Soundman on **BLOOD BATH** was Gary Kurtz who went on to produce the **STAR WARS** movies. 1968 was a busy year for Hill. Before his death, Boris Karloff shot scenes in Los Angeles for five weeks to be included in four US/Mexican releases all written and co-directed (with Juan Ibanez) by Hill. The films were **HOUSE OF EVIL**, **THE FEAR CHAMBER**, **INVASION SINISTRA** and **THE SNAKE PEOPLE**. Karloff died February 2, 1969.]

**FAX:** Didn't Dennis Jacob and Monte Hellman also work on **THE TERROR**?

ridiculous. No man could have lived through it.

[Miller played Baron von Leppe's (Karloff) servant, Stephan. Jack Nicholson (Lt. Andre Duvalier), Sandra Knight (beautiful woman/ghost) and Jonathan Haze (Custan) were also in the cast.]

**FAX:** Was Jack Nicholson also directing for Corman besides acting?

**MILLER:** Not really, but about that time he did put together some strange little western. He wanted to make movies. We were all trying at the time. He got his movie off the ground so he was lucky, but the picture is a joke.

**FAX:** You've spent thirty years making movies but what did you do before you started in show business?



Dick Miller plays a bystanding bartender in **OKLAHOMA WOMAN** (1955).

[Monte Hellman directed **THE BEAST FROM THE HAUNTED CAVE** in 1959 for executive producer Roger Corman. It was co-billed with **THE WASP WOMAN**.]

**MILLER:** That's right. Monte Hellman directed some pick-up shots of horses and castles and things. There was another big pause in the production. I thought the film was finally finished but then a couple of months later I get another call. The picture had already run on for six or seven months. How long was the picture? Well, it was a 20 day schedule but we stretched it out. It was very funny. Also, every time they would write something, I would get getting beaten. They didn't exactly know where to put all those scenes so they all fall in about the last ten minutes of the picture. Everyone gets a shot at me. Boris beats me up with a chain and then I run out the door so Jack Nicholson can beat me up. Then an old witch beats me up. Sandra and Boris beat me up again in the water. It was

**MILLER:** I've always been in show business. I started singing in the Catskill Mountains of New York when I was eight years old. I wasn't a show business kid or anything like that, but I was always doing something musical. I sang and I played the drums; put together a little high school band and we would play at dances. I worked as a professional singer later and did some summer stock. It's all very classic. I had a friend who said, "Come on up. I've got a free summer for you." So I went, painted flats and after I had watched the actors for a while I decided that I could do that too. I went into music and very seriously thought of making a career as a singer back in the late 1940s.

Acting, however, I discovered quite by accident, not by working in school or summer stock or anything. After getting out of the service there was a point where I ran out of money so I decided to go to school and get an education. The government would pay for it. I looked in the newspaper to see who was mak-

ing a lot of money and saw that upholsterers were making about \$2.00 an hour. That was good money then so I thought I'd become an upholsterer. I applied to the New York School of Upholstering from a booklet I had and went down to sign up. After I had filled out all the papers, the guy says, Well, I'll see you next week. School starts at 8 A.M. I said, No, No! I've got to go at night. He says they don't have any night courses. I can't go to school at night in the morning because I don't go to bed until four in the morning. So I looked in the booklet and the very next school on the list was the New York Theater School Of Dramatic Arts. I used the upholsterer's phone and called them to see what time their classes started. It depends on when the workshop is, he explained, either nine or eleven in the morning. So I said, If you can give me an eleven o'clock workshop, I'll come down and join the school. That's it. That's exactly what happened. I went down to Carnegie Hall, signed up and became an actor. I had acted before, but I hadn't devoted my whole life to it. All of a sudden I realized that there was so much more to

it. The school was very thorough and it opened all kinds of doors in my head. And I got lucky, which is also part of it. I started working right away. The first two years out of school I was writing, producing and directing in both radio and television, live television. FAX: What programs did you work on? MILLER: I did 325 of *The Best Parks Variety Shows* which was a three-day-a-week afternoon program. At the same time I went to work for Bobby Sherwood, doing what was precursive to *The Tonight Show*, on a show called *Midnight Set*. We did interviews and performed a little from a couch. That was every night. Bobby also had a disk jockey show on WOR in New York and I went to work for him there as his program director. I was constantly busy with three or four steady shows going at once and trying to squeeze in some dramatics whenever I could. But as the show's contracts dropped off I decided to come to California and give it a try as an actor in motion pictures—up there on the big screen. It was just one foot in front of another. For about a year and a half I wound up sitting on my tail until

I ran into Roger Corman. That's where it started. Eventually I ended up doing about 35 or 40 films for Roger.

FAX: You've starred in a great number of films over the years, but many of your fans feel some of your smaller roles are the most memorable.

MILLER: I starred for Roger in *A BUCKET OF BLOOD*, *ROCK ALL NIGHT*, *SORORITY GIRL* and *WAR OF THE SATELLITES*, to name a few. These are all top starring parts, but there's a difference between starring in low budget independents and moving on to the majors and trying to get the same roles. If you do bust loose, like Robert Redford, you're lucky. If not, you seek a different level. I've been fortunate to get some very good character parts after leaving the independents. I got older but I didn't get any taller.

FAX: Having worked in so many films, you've probably formulated your own ideas on directing.

MILLER: Every director seems to have his own style. They do fall into a couple of major groups though. They're either very loud and vociferous and insist on

(Continued on page 58)

## DICK MILLER FILMOGRAPHY \*Indicates Starring or Costarring roles.

### TELEVISION

Midnight Set (325 shows)  
Bert Parks (200 shows)  
Municipal Court  
Milton Berle Variety  
Martin Kane  
The Web  
Studio One  
Playhouse 90  
Danger  
Fat Man\*  
Lawless Years  
Untouchables  
Roaring Twenties  
Cabana 54\*  
Our Man Higgins\*  
Recruiters\*

Dragnet\*  
Wagon Train  
Virginian  
Andersonville Trial\*  
Whirlwind  
Oh, Susanna\*  
M Squad  
Alaskans  
Bonanza  
Branded  
Mannix\*  
McCloud  
Police Woman  
Police Story  
Soap\*  
11th Victim\*

Alfie  
Barnaby Jones  
Taxi  
General Hospital\*  
Open All Night\*  
Police Squad\*  
Foot In The Door  
The Quest  
Renegades  
Knot's Landing\*  
Taxi\*  
"V" (mini-series)  
Walter\* (pilot)  
Tales From  
the Dark Side\*  
Fame\*

### FEATURE FILMS

Apache Woman  
Oklaoma Woman  
The Undead  
The Gunslinger  
Thunder Over Hawaii\*  
Carnival Rock\*  
Rock All Night\*  
Sorority Girl\*  
A Bucket of Blood\*  
Atlas  
Premature Burial  
The Terror\*  
Targets  
Besch Ball  
Snow Fall  
Ski Party  
The Wild Angels  
The Trip  
Four For Texas  
Wild Wild Winter  
Too Late The Hero  
Ukama's Raiders

It Conquered the World  
War of the Satellites\*  
Little Shop of Horrors\*  
Man with the X-Ray Eyes  
Hells Angels on Wheels  
Legend of Lylah Clare  
The Dirty Dozen  
Flight of the Phoenix  
Hush Hush Sweet Charlotte  
What's In It For Harry  
The Wild Racers  
Not Of This Earth\*  
The Long Ride Home\*  
Time For Killing\*  
St. Valentine Day Massacre\*  
Grissome Gang  
The Learning Factor\*  
Night Duty Nurse  
Student Teachers\*  
Executive Action\*  
The Slams  
Truck Turner

Big Bad Mama\*  
Duck Town Strutters\*  
Longest Yard  
The Fortune  
Summer School Teachers\*  
Capone\*  
Crazy Mama  
Hustle  
Vigilante Force  
White Line Fever\*  
Hollywood Blvd.\*  
Moving Violation  
Cannonball\*  
Mr. Billion\*  
New York, New York  
Starbops  
I Wanna Hold Your Hand  
Coquette Summer  
Piranha\*  
Rock and Roll High School\*  
1941  
Lady In Red\*

Dr. Heckyl & Mr. Hype  
Happy Hooker  
Goes to Hollywood  
The Howling\*  
Heartbeeps\*  
Used Cars  
Follow That Car\*  
National Lampoon  
Goes to the Movies  
White Dog  
Lies  
Heart Like A Wheel\*  
Get Crazy  
Twilight Zone\*  
Space Raiders  
Swing Shift  
All The Right Moves  
Gremlins\*  
Terminator  
Explorers\*  
After Hours\*



Above, Miller cast as "Sharty," sits pensively at the bar in *ROCK ALL NIGHT*. (Photos courtesy of AIP.)

# Space Patrol

## Missions of Daring in the Name of Early Television Part One:

Article and Interviews by JEAN-NOËL BASSIOR

*Striking through hyper-space, the Terra IV, flagship of the Space Patrol, pursues a vector toward planet Earth. Commander Corry, at the controls, issues an order to cut time-drive, while Cadet Happy checks the astrogation chart. Position: holding 3,000 DU's above the May Company department store, Los Angeles, Earth's 20th century. Carol and Tonga secure all hatches, then brace themselves against the ladder in the aft compartment as the Commander lowers the ship down vertically on repeller rays, through an alien landscape of mannequins and coat racks. Major Robertson breathes a sigh of relief as the viewscope confirms that the huge battle-cruiser, packed with official Space Patrol gear, has landed safely on the second floor. Atmosphere check: no spacesuits necessary. The visit to Earth has been advertised in newspapers days in advance. In response, on the concrete surface of the planet below, 30,000 fans converge in surface-cars. . . .*

The day to avoid that traffic jam on Wilshire Boulevard was Tuesday, June 26, 1951. Blasting off only nine months earlier as a 15-minute daily series out of ABC's Hollywood affiliate KECA, the show was clearly headed into stardrive. The magic hinged around the cast: Commander Buzz Corry, Cadet Happy, Carol, Major Robertson, and Tonga—five totally believable 30th-century personalities, whose lives entwined with soap-opera strength as they undertook 'missions of daring in the name of interplanetary justice' for an organization serving the noblest galactic ideals: the Space Patrol.

The show's creator, director, and leading actor were all real-life World War II pilots, no strangers to panic and danger miles above the Earth. Airman William "Mike" Moser, a cherub-faced movie and radio script-writer, first conceived of an interplanetary police force fending off cosmic enablers and keeping the space lanes clear, while flying Navy Air Force missions over the South Pacific. Moser got to wondering about the universe, he told *TIME* magazine in 1952, and out of that wonderment his brain birthed the United Planets, a solar confederation devoted to peace, but willing to fight when menaced by relentless foes, whose morals had not caught up with their technology. Moser, after chartering the United Planets, only spent three more years on Earth. He was killed by a speeding

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Photo: A full crew of smiling Space Patrolers pose in the plywood cockpit of their flagship, the Terra V (which never looked quite so crude on early television.) From left to right: Cadet Happy (Lyn Osborn), Major "Robbie" Robertson (Ken Mayer), Carol Carlisle (Virginia Hewitt), Commander "Buzz" Corry (Ed Kemmer) and Robbie's assistant, Tonga (Nima Bava).



surface-car in a Los Angeles intersection.

Nine months after its debut, the show went network—and captured the dawning space-age fantasies of the nation. *Space Patrol* was huge. A sponsor-conducted survey revealed that adults were hooked along with their kids. *LIFE* magazine reported in 1952 that a convention of top stellar scientists meeting in California opened with the chairman remarking, "Even though Commander Corry may not agree with me, the moon is . . ." The article estimated the show's viewership at 7 million.

Paraphernalia deluged department stores: flight suits, boots, space helmets, pup tents. ("At one point it seemed," says director Dick Darley, "that every flashlight in the world was a *Space Patrol* flashlight.") Once Commander Corry, for reasons best known to himself, removed a two-foot inflatable space-bunny named "Cosmo" from some far reach of the galaxy, and that was immediately marketed. Card-board and plastic cereal-box premiums (ray guns, rockets, space-o-phones) were offered weekly by sponsor Ralston/Purina, makers of Wheat Chex and Rice Chex, for "one box-top plus 25 cents in coin." In 1952, sales of *Space Patrol* merchandise were projected at \$40 million. That's a lot of box-tops.

The actors merged deeper and deeper with their characters as they kept pace with the almost impossible weekly schedule: a daily 15-minute segment aired locally in Los Angeles, the half-hour network show on Saturday and,

to top it off, two radio episodes. On weekends they toured the country, gracing telethons, openings, promotions, benefits. Major Robertson (Ken Mayer) pointed out to Tonga that they were spending more time in uniform than in civilian clothes. "It was pretty hard to get out of character, we were together so much," recalls Ed Kemmer. "I was Corry even when I wasn't. Not that I ever was a real Buzz Corry who could take on the world; but there were attributes Corry had that I adopted. When you play a running role for a long time, it's not so much that you become that role: that role becomes you."

"I think the characters they developed into weren't there at the beginning—they found their way as they went," says director Darley. "When you're in a show of a juvenile nature, you have to take it as seriously as if you're doing an adult thing." Darley made a personal decision early on to shoot the show from an adult angle, and the cast rose to the occasion. No one treated *Space Patrol* as "just" a children's show. "Everybody meant it," Darley says about the cast. "If Major Robertson found out that Hap and Buzz had crashed, he would get upset, and I think he really was concerned. It wasn't like 'Hey, I'm a Hollywood actor and I do better things than this.'"

Character believability weaves back and forth through many memories as the thread holding the show together when guest actors went blank and special effects went berserk. "We were an inner family group, fulfilling a need, as soap operas have done for years," says

Kemmer. "If one member didn't get you, the other did." And Kemmer got to most people, with his leading-man looks, daring but thoughtful: the perfect hero. Though barely thirty, he melded authority and compassion into a portrait of the quintessential Commander-in-Chief. Kids related to him as a father they could trust. No matter how threatening the peril, Commander Corry had a plan. "Or was looking for one, or hoping to have one," Kemmer laughs in a voice deepened by the years. "Knowing there must be a way out and by-God-we'll-find-it." But, in the meantime, "playing the fear, playing the unknown—maybe something could go wrong . . . maybe you won't live through it . . ." Still, *TIME* magazine pointed out in 1952, should a show end with the Commander facing certain death, the camera moved in to reveal a faint smile on the hero's face, a tip-off to young viewers that Corry would prevail. "If we cause a single nightmare," *Space Patrol*'s creator, Mike Moser, stated, "we've failed in our purpose."

Commander Corry's romantic interest was Carol Carlisle (Virginia Hewitt), daughter of the Secretary General of the United Planets. But it was unrequited love, forever. Interplanetary pressures being what they were, Buzz hardly had time to kiss the cold nose of his spaceship. Carol radiated dazzling blonde looks, even through your black and white TV screen. Plus, she could fly a spaceship and concoct inventions in her laboratory. Frequently kidnapped, she was resistant yet composed



until Buzz could rescue her.

Major Robertson (Ken Mayer) was always there when you needed him. "Without Robbie, we'd have been in big trouble," Kemmer admits. Calm yet concerned, like a favorite uncle, Robbie's presence gave Buzz some leeway. If the villains threw a nasty curve, trapping Corry in a hide-out in some remote corner of the galaxy, you knew that Robbie was on his way. Major Robertson exuded tough love, even pursuing his own missions of daring, on occasion, as *Space Patrol* Security Chief. But back at headquarters, if Buzz radioed in a message of possible peril, you knew Robbie's response: "I'll be standing by, Commander."

Robbie's assistant was Tonga, a bizarre state of affairs, since she was a reformed criminal. However, that 30th-century medical marvel, the Brainograph, which cleansed thoughts as easily as they used to wash clothes back in the 20th century, had rid her of evil intentions; sort of. Sometimes she reverted. It was like that unpredictable aunt of yours who might be in a strange mood next time she visited. But it was exciting, and Tonga was exotic, and it was fun sometimes when she was bad (even though you wished she'd be good), and it kept Commander Corry guessing. . . .

And then there was Hap.

Cadet Happy, portrayed by Lyn Osborn, was the indelible character of the show. As Corry's lighthearted sidekick, Hap deflected terror into comedy, and asked questions that allowed Commander Corry to deliver informative



*Photos: Top of the page, left to right, director Dick Darley gives some last minute instructions to Lyn Osborn, Nina Barrett, and Ed Kemmer in the studio mockup of the Terra V. Ken Mayer, Ed Kemmer, Virginia Hewitt, Bela Kovacs, Nina Bara and Lyn Osborn take a break in front of the studio canteen. An unknown actor, Lyn, Ed and Ken rehearse in front of the KECA camera. Dick Darley chooses props for that day's show from the studio storeroom. Bottom left, the Space Patrol cast (with Lyn pointing the Captain Video surplus ray gun) and several unknown actors pose for a group shot. Third from the left is scriptwriter Norman Jolly, who also played villain "Agent X." (Note the recycled Captain Marvel chapterfilm shirts worn by Ken Mayer, top right, and friend.) Photos courtesy of Andy Andersen and Beth Flood.*



monologues essential to the show's plot. Osborn's genius was to make us believe we could be like him. His irrepressible, child-like energy bounced right out at you like a ball you had to catch. Hap was an adult/child, just like us; therefore, we could be just like him. "You felt," says Jim Buchanan, who sports one of the country's largest collections of Space Patrol memorabilia, "that if you got the membership kit and joined the Space Patrol you were one of the cadets, almost like Lyn Osborn, working with the Commander, protecting the Universe."

According to most accounts, Osborn was truly, offscreen, like the character he played. "It was just like the part was made for him. I think it was easy for him to slip into it," says his sister, Beth Flood. Director Darley agrees: "Whenever he needed something to feed off of, for the character, it was just himself. Other than saying 'Smokin' rockets' and that laugh that developed, he was just playing Lyn. He was like a spark in a bottle. I tried to keep him under control without losing that child-like quality. You have to be, you know, wild to have that much strength come across the screen."

"He was funny, funny . . . marvelous!" Ed Kemmer remembers. "But he'd be funny when you wished he wouldn't be . . . on the show, ON THE AIR." Osborn was a nutsy practical joker whose antics pushed cast and crew to the edge of endurance before they dissolved into helpless laughter. One of Hap's favorite pastimes was to put the Commander on the spot. "The worst thing," Kemmer smiles, "was when Hap would go cold on a line. He'd give his funny little laugh and look at

me, and say, 'What do you say, Commander?' And I had to say something. I could have killed him at that moment, but I got used to it. You could never get really angry at him . . ." Kemmer's voice softens.

**"B**urlesque people are the greatest people in the world," Lyn Osborn informed his family in 1943. His father didn't think so. The elder Osborn, superintendent of a Detroit oil refinery, put his slender five-foot-seven-inch son to work slinging heavy oil drums around the plant. "He wasn't cut out for that," muses Bill Flood, Lyn's brother-in-law, "but when he first started wanting to be an actor, his father was dead set against it. That's what Lyn had to fight."

It's a lazy Disneyland afternoon in Anaheim, California. The Magic Kingdom sparkles four miles to the east of this no-nonsense trailer park where Beth and Bill Flood relax prior to hitting the road in their 33-foot Monitor motor home, bound for retirement adventure.

Beth's eyes flash sibling resemblance. "My brother was just out of the Navy," she remembers, "and for awhile he didn't do anything. Then he started dating a burlesque dancer. She was sort of a comic, too, and an inspiration to him; they used to play off each other." The future cadet became a fixture in Detroit bars, mesmerized by his girlfriend and her zany cabaret crowd as they worked the club circuit night after night. "He'd come home in the wee hours of the morning, not wanting to even look for a job . . . He'd found his home among those people. I think that's where he first got the idea he wanted to be a comedian." Beth's eyes wander out the window, scanning the staid rows of aluminum trailers symmetrically bordering the highway. "He was kind of—a bum—during that period. My Dad had no faith in him at all; he never thought he'd amount to anything."

SCENE: Major Robertson is off on a mission in a far corner of the galaxy. Suddenly, he spots a phenomenon



Photos: Top right, Lyn Osborn clowns around on a kiddie trike as Ken Mayer leads the way during a personal stage appearance (probably a telethon). Bottom left, one of Lyn's autographed fan photos. Opposite page, Cadet Happy jokes with Commander "Buzz." Carry in this early publicity still (note the original blouse-sleeved uniforms) which Lyn Osborn had signed: "Hi, Moon! To the best mother in the whole Universe! Love always—Buddy (his family nickname). Photos courtesy of Lyn Osborn's sister, Beth Flood.



never seen before; a mysterious ring-shaped planet orbiting the distant sun Algol. Grabbing the hyper-space-o-phone, he radios Buzz and Hap in the Terra V, millions of DU's away. The Major gives a play-by-play as he steers his ship through the planet's strange 'ring'. Abruptly, a powerful force hits the ship, the Major groans as his rockets roar out of control; static interference. Buzz yells into the receiver in vain, then puts down the dead space-o-phone and restlessly paces the cockpit. Silence.

COMMANDER: Happy.

HAP: Yes, Sir?

COMMANDER: What would Robbie do if we were the ones who were lost, and he was searching for us?

HAP: Well, he'd turn this part of space upside down until he found us. He wouldn't stop until he did.

COMMANDER: You wouldn't expect us to do any less, would you?

HAP: Well... no, Sir!

Buzz is lost in thought. Finally, he leans over Hap's shoulder as the cadet keeps the ship on course.

COMMANDER: Glad you said that, Happy. Because what we've got to do is going to leave us wide open. HAP: [worried] What do you mean, Sir?

COMMANDER: Whatever happened to Robbie happened as he was flying through the center of that planet.

HAP: You—you—y-you mean we're going to do the same thing, ... Sir?

COMMANDER: That's the only way we can find him. [Pause. Buzz looks expectant, waits.]

HAP: [bites his lip] Let's go.

BUZZ: [hand on his cadet's shoulder] Good boy.

"My father never touched or hugged us—you never knew how he felt," Beth Flood recalls. "Of course, after Lyn made it big, he was proud of him, and sorry he hadn't helped him more when he was struggling. But, at the time, he thought he'd be throwing money away."

The Depression Years. William Osborn moved the family from Wichita Falls, Texas, to California in search of work; then east to Michigan, where a close friend offered a job at a new oil refinery. "My brother was named 'Clois' after that friend, but he hated it and never went by it. I don't know where the 'Lynn' came from [his middle name]—he dropped the second 'n.' I called him 'my little brother boy,' only it came out 'brudder,' and 'Bud' stuck. At the Pasadena Playhouse they dubbed him 'Mugsy' because he looked like Leo Gorcey of the 'Dead End Kids'."

Ed Kemmer still calls him 'Hap.'

"I treated him like a wayward son at times, but with love, with care, with understanding. We got so used to each other—1400 shows! He was a lovable minx. He could always get you off that high, too-serious attitude. Space Patrol was a sweaty, ditch-digging job at times, and I'd be plugging away... Hap pulled me back to reality. He'd see me shouldering what I felt I had to shoulder and he'd say, 'Tomorrow's another day. There'll be another show next week!'"

The Osborns settled in Wolf Lake, Michigan, where Lyn and Beth attended a one-room school. Outgoing Bess Osborn made sure her son and daughter were part of every children's theater group in the Detroit suburb of Lincoln Park, where the family eventually relocated. "I was embarrassed," laughs Beth, "but my brother gloried in it. He was always acting, even way back then."

On the heels of his love affair with burlesque, Lyn struck out for Chicago

—no one quite remembers why—and settled for a job as busboy at the posh Ambassador East Hotel. A national figure several years later, he delighted in reminding certain fellow celebrities he had cleared their dirty dishes.

Nobody knows for sure what transformed Osborn's lighthearted fling with burlesque into a serious passion for high drama; but suddenly the busboy hitchhiked West to cash in his GI Bill at one of the country's premier acting schools: The Pasadena Playhouse.

"He drove a cab, he did restaurant work, he wrote sad letters to my parents asking for \$10 to pull him through when the GI payment was late... How he must have hated that," says Beth, who recently disposed of the long epistles because they were so depressing. But Osborn was determined. Two grinding years later, he produced and starred in the school's graduation production. "He was practically the whole show," his sister beams. The Playhouse bestowed an invitation for graduate study, but, concurrently, a more prestigious institution beckoned: In 1950 Lyn



Osborn became the first recipient of the much-coveted Corry Scholarship, awarded yearly to one promising cadet by Captain Buzz Corry, an officer in the Space Patrol.

Captain Corry, best known for inventing Endurium, an indestructible metal used in space-ship hulls, was irked these days because a state of the art system nicknamed 'super-power-space-drive' was not yet standard equipment on Space Patrol battle-cruisers. Thus Patrol ships could only escort transport and passenger carriers to planetary perimeters; then the civilian ships were on their own, fair game for increasing hordes of vicious space pirates. As history reminds us:

*The Space Patrol was not always a powerful instrument of justice. Once its ships clung close to the planets, powerless to combat the bold marauders who terrorized the void. Then, in a universe filled with fear and chaos, there appeared—a leader: Buzz Corry, a man whose vision and courage extended to the stars.*

(Decca 78 record; "Buzz Corry Becomes Commander-in-Chief").

One day Corry has a student observer from Earth's Space Academy aboard his ship: Cadet Happy—winner of the coveted Corry Scholarship. Suddenly the space-o-phone crackles, and the voice of the Secretary General himself, head of the United Planets, asks Corry to pick up the escort of an interplanetary transport carrying workable blueprints for the new top-secret super-power-space-drive. But Prince Baccarratti, evil tyrant of the planet Neptune, is lurking in the space lanes. Baccarratti uses his null-ray to neutralize the power, weapons, and space-o-phone of the transport, boards it, and seizes the

plans from the helpless crew. When Corry arrives, the damage is done. "C'mon, Hap," he vows, "I'll catch Baccarratti if I have to chase him all the way to Arcturus!"

Cornering the power-mad Prince, Corry and the cadet cut their way into the tyrant's ship with an atomo-torch and recover the top-secret plans, nearly losing their lives in the process. A few days later, back on the man-made planet Terra, captain and cadet stand in awe before the Secretary General.

SECRETARY GENERAL: I wanted to tell you, Corry, that, thanks to you, ships with the new super-power-space-drive are already in production. That means that all the planets can extend their perimeters considerably. That solves many of our problems, but it creates others. One is to find a man who can organize the individual planet defenses into one operation. I've solved that

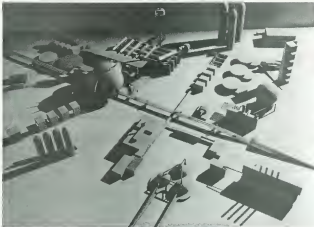
problem. The other problems, Corry, are up to you.

CAPTAIN CORRY: To me, Sir? SECRETARY GENERAL: Yes. You are now Commander-in-Chief of the Space Patrol! Well, Corry, haven't you anything to say?

CORRY: Well, I... I... HAP: [laughs out of control] Congratulations, Captain, I mean COMMANDER, I mean... Oh, smokin' rockets!!

The 20th Century, Earth's second World War. German artillery knocks Ed Kemmer's P-51 Mustang out of the sky, and the future Commander has only one problem: jump or burn?

"I thought I was too low to bail out, but it caught fire; I had no choice." Upper Manhattan's Riverside Drive. Kemmer, very trim, in jeans, plaid shirt, square western belt buckle and still-square jaw, leans forward. The lamplight plays with Buzz Corry's iden-



tifiable curls—now handsome shades of dark gray, light gray, Endurium. "I'd bail out at ten feet, rather than face burning. You just don't burn."

The propeller-driven fighter, shot down, dived low. The speed of the falling aircraft twisted Kemmer's parachute and he hit the ground flat on his back, "harder than hell." [Deep breath.] "It just knocked me silly—I felt it in every bone in my body, but I was happy to be alive. The first thing I remember is coming to—I wasn't really 'out', but I didn't quite know what was going on. You think of your E and E lectures—Escape and Evade. First thing is, get out of the chute, hide the chute, and get the hell out of there." Kemmer started struggling out of the parachute. Someone shot him in the leg. "There were Germans all around. I guess they'd been yelling at me—I didn't hear them." No one moved the scenery, or cut to a commercial. There was no space-o-phone at hand to radio Hap or Major Robertson for help. Kemmer raised his hands above his head . . .

The POW camp, housing 8,000 air officers—pilots, bombardiers, navigators—had a few good points. Kemmer was placed in a British compound where, to keep busy and forget about hunger, some of the men staged plays. Ed experimented with acting in a production called *The Front Page*. Someday, he thought, he might give it a whirl. But the pressing problem, day-in, day-out, was not enough food. His weight dropped from 185 pounds to 133. To forget about hunger, he joined the band, playing bass and piano, and noted the well-oiled organizational structure of the camp. Besides the theater group, the band, and other food-free pastimes, there was the Escape Committee.

"If you had an idea for escape, you had to figure it all out, I mean every bit



of it, and present it to the Escape Committee and get their blessing. If they said no, you didn't try it."

Once a horse-drawn wagon, loaded with trash, left the camp. The driver paused at the main gate, under a catwalk. A guard on the catwalk jabbed a steel spike at the end of a long rod repeatedly into the trash. At a distance, Kemmer watched, while the head of the Escape Committee informed him that a man was concealed in the refuse. "The chances were, they wouldn't hit you. Someone took a chance that day. I think he got away, because there was no yell . . . nothing. The wagon went on."

Kemmer acknowledges that observing this kind of daring fed into the creation of Buzz Corry. "We go back to experience. The more you experience life of any kind—wartime, if you're going to play an action character—can only add to what you draw on, instead of just imagination."

The "gutsiest escape" he ever witnessed involved a cast of 3,000 prisoners, who took a risk for two men. "It was January, I mean, snow all over the place. The American compound, with 3,000 prisoners, is right next door to ours. You have barbed wire. First, a warning wire, about a foot off the ground. Don't cross it: a guard will shoot you. Then the first barbed wire fence, then tangled barbed wire for about 10 yards, then a second fence—that's what kept you in." There were goon towers about 30 feet high, at inter-

vals, manned with armed guards.

Every morning and every evening the men were counted. On this freezing morning the word was passed that at a "throw" signal, during roll call, they were to start a snowball fight. Kemmer lights another cigarette, body tense. "Now we knew it was to mask something, so I'm throwing snowballs, we're all throwing like mad," [arms flail, voice rises, excitement enters the room] "and I'm wondering what's going on . . . And all the guards in the goon boxes are watching 3,000 men throwing snowballs. It's a sight. You couldn't get it in a movie!"

"Well. Over in the compound next door, two American guys walked right underneath a goon tower, with wire cutters—and they kept right on going. Not one guard was looking down there—in broad daylight. That took guts!"

Kemmer started thinking about escape.

SCENE: Commander Corry and Cadet Happy approach the mysterious hidaway which is base of operations for Marza, an evil, invisible Being who holds Major Robertson and other Space Patrolmen captive. CORRY: Hap, as we landed, I got a quick look at Manza's structure. Here . . . [shows Hap a roughly-drawn sketch]. As I remember, it was a square, walled area, with another square wall surrounding that one, and another square wall sur-



Photos: Opposite page, top, Ed Kemmer displays a studio miniature of the Space Patrol flagship, *Terra V*. Bottom left, Captain Corry, Hap and Robbie cut their way into Prince Baccarat's spaceship with makeshift "atomo-torches." (Also note the DESTINATION MOON spaceuits, fire extinguisher rocket packs, garden gloves, and plywood spaceship hull.) Bottom center, Commander Corry shakes hands with Captain Nardo, and Icarian from the Space Patrol series featuring the invisible being, Manza. This page, top right, the wonderfully detailed studio miniature of Terra City Spaceport. (Photos courtesy of Space Patrol historian, Andy Andersen.)

rounding that one, and so on . . . Must be about five or six of them—each one enclosing the other.  
HAP: Now I get it! We can use the Space Patrol periscope to look over each wall as we come to it, and work our way to the center.

[Using the periscope, Buzz peers over the first wall.]

HAP: Any guards?

CORRY: No . . . I don't see any. No, wait! There's some kind of a guard—a robot, I think.

HAP: A robot guard?

CORRY: Take a look, but be careful.

HAP: Smokin' rockets, Commander! It looks like a tank. It's got a gun turret and everything!

CORRY: Uh-oh!

HAP: What's the matter, Sir?

CORRY: That's the only opening, but the robot guard's sitting right in front of it!

HAP: Oh, great. That's all we need. What are we gonna do?

CORRY: We've come this far. No point in turning back now.

HAP: Yeah, but how are we gonna get around that robot?

CORRY: Make a run for it.

HAP: A run, Sir?

CORRY: Yes. Right now, that first robot—it'll take a couple of seconds for him to sight in on us. If we're fast enough, maybe . . . maybe we can take advantage of those few seconds, get past him, and through that door, before he can shoot at us.

HAP: Uh, just maybe, Sir?

CORRY: Just maybe, Hap. Maybe we'll find Robbie in there.

HAP: That's good enough for me, Sir.

CORRY: Here we go . . .

(Program #186:  
"Space Patrol Periscope")



Photo: Ed Kemmer in uniform as Commander "Buzz" Corry. (Photo courtesy of Jean-Nöel Basslor.)



Photo: Space Patrolers Robbie, Buzz, Hap, Tonga and Carol, cosmic crime fighters of the 30th century, take time out to participate in a popular 20th century sport called baseball. (Photo courtesy of Beth Flood.)

Kemmer fled the POW camp with the camp interpreter and another man. They headed towards Switzerland but Kemmer, weak, kept falling behind. "I was holding them up. They'd been prisoners for much less time than I, so they were stronger, and though they insisted I keep going, I said, 'No, you go on.' They could make much better time without me." The terrain was rough, and the men had to stay off every path or road, traveling at night, holed up during the day. It was April, cold and wet. They dug up seed potatoes for food.

"I'd just had it—I was hurting then, I couldn't go on . . . So I gave them a night's start." He found himself alone, roaming the woods, a fugitive POW. He came to an isolated house and from a distance observed an elderly man and woman, and very young children. At dusk he approached . . .

SCENE: Commander Corry, Cadet Happy, and Major Robertson have apprehended Arachna, the "Space Spider", merciless human ruler of a ring-shaped planet, who operates

like his insect counterpart by snaring unwary space travelers in a 'web' of force rays. As the Space Patrolmen prepare to take Arachna's debilitated prisoners back to Terra for medical attention, the Space Spider escapes, taking with him a lithium component from the planet's delicate anti-gravity booster.

COMMANDER CORRY: That lithium capsule's gone!

HAP: Arachna must have taken it with him!

COMMANDER: The power's still on! [A menacing rumble in the distance, coming closer.]

HAP: Hey . . . What's that?

COMMANDER: That's what I mean! There are seven other lithium deposits still generating gravity, but with that one gone, it'll set up stresses.

MAJOR ROBERTSON: That means it's just a matter of time before the gravity booster pulls this planet apart!

COMMANDER: You two get aboard the Terra V and blast off. With that one lithium capsule

gone, there'll be a gap in the gravity field—but you can get through it in the Terra V.

HAP: Yeah, but Commander, what about you?

COMMANDER: You've got to get those prisoners to safety. I'll follow in that decoy ship as soon as I find Arachna.

MAJOR: Oh, but Commander. . .

HAP: Commander, you can't. . .

COMMANDER: Blast off. That's an order!

HAP, ROBBIE: Yes, Sir.

Aboard the Terra V a few minutes later:

HAP: But, Major, we can't just blast off and leave the Commander here!

MAJOR: We've got an order, Hap.

HAP: Yes, Sir.

MAJOR: [lays hand on Hap's shoulder] Besides, he knows what he's doing.

ing.

(Program #204: "Collapse of the Spider's Web")

The German family was sympathetic. "By that time, the war was 'nicht gut', Hitler was 'nicht gut'. I told them in broken German: 'Prisoner of war, Sick.' And I didn't look so good, either, I'll tell you. I was so cold. God, I'd been wet for a week. I sat by their kitchen stove. They gave me a piece of bread which tasted like angel food cake, and some warm milk, and that was heaven. . . . It was truly heaven."

Then a friend of the family appeared, a loyal member of the 'People's Army,' sporting an armband, and a sidearm. "He was kind enough, but he made it plain he had a duty to turn me over to a military outfit nearby. I tried to argue and he started to reach for his gun, to force me. . . . so, of course, I went."

"Some things you don't discuss," says Virginia Hewitt Meer, who played *Space Patrol's* 'Carol,' daughter of the Secretary General of the United Planets, "and Buzz would not talk about the POW experience, at least to me, and I don't think to the rest of the cast. Especially then—it was still too close. But I knew he had not been treated. . . . beautifully."

Did Virginia think there was some quality in Ed truly akin to the heroic Buzz Corry?

"Yes. He was stoic enough to want to escape. I think he must have been a very brave man."

Fortunately, the commanding officer who received Kemmer into custody from the 'family friend' was also sympathetic. "He was marvelous," Ed says, "untensing his body and settling deeply into an armchair against bookshelves in comfortable disarray. "And there was food." Big German women fed him in the warm mess hall, and he stuffed as much bread as he could into his shirt, just in case. Soon, through the German

colonel's kindness, he was sent back to rejoin the same POWs he was with when he escaped. Shortly afterwards, Patton came through, heralding liberation.

Silence. Kemmer hands himself another cigarette.

To what extent did the war experience shape the heroic makeup of Buzz Corry, daring galactic hero of the 30th century—an almost-perfect Commander-in-Chief?

"I think it all helped—any experience of life and death, of fear, of physical manipulation; doing what you have to do to accomplish something you think maybe you can't. As an actor, you draw on everything. The more you've done, the better."

Anything else?

[Slightly] "The sensed memory of real fear. One time they threatened to shoot

me in the morning. We'd had lectures saying, 'If you get shot down, captured, they'll threaten, but don't worry, they probably won't. It was a way of getting you to talk. I didn't know anything that could help them; they knew more than I did.'"

There was some quality, the interviewer suggests, that seemed to spill over from real experience—some magic, some depth in the character of Corry that fulfilled the heroic fantasies of the nation, contributing to the enormous popularity of the show.

"Well," [a little stiffly] "I like to think that it came off well, that you're right. . . . [softer] I suppose there was an experience there that a lot of young guys didn't have—true. If I brought something to it, I'm happy with that [repeats], I'm happy with that. . . . [voice low] I don't know how some other ac-



Photo: Ed Kemmer and Virginia Hewitt sign autographs for some admiring young fans during a personal appearance at the Grand Hotel. (Photo courtesy of Beth Flood.)

# Space Patrol COLLECTIBLES

32 FILMFX



Photos: Outer frame, clockwise from bottom left. The official Space Patrol Badge and Decoder Buckle (top view). Cover of the Top Secret Space Patrol United Planets Treasury Department Diplomatic Punch which contained (1) Full color United Planets Stamps (2) Full color United Planets Plastic Coins (3) Authentic United Planets currency (4) Official Space Patrol Stationary (5) 16 page color stamp album (6) 3-fold coin album. The official printed Space Patrol lunch napkin. The Ziff-Davis Comics Group's official Space Patrol comic book, summer issue. Cover of the official Space Patrol Stamp Album. A selection of the colorful sticker-stamps from the official Stamp Al-

bum. Cover of the official Space Patrol Coin Album. A selection of the colorful coins included with the official Coin Album. Another cover from the official Space Patrol comic book series No. Oct./Nov. The back cover of the Space Patrol comics advertised more official merchandise such as the Space Patrol Belt with its special identity shield buckle in "smoking rocket plating" and a choice of belt colors: "Black Night, Blasting Red, Jet Green or Ray Tan." The official Milton Bradley Space Patrol jig-saw puzzle. The official Space Patrol Badge and Decoder Buckle (bottom view, with secret decoder exposed).

Inner section of rare full-color Space Patrol publicity photos:

left to right, top down. Ken Mayer as Major Robbie Robertson poses next to an astro-globe while holding his tabloid-sized space Patrol Bulletin. A detailed shot of the miniature model of Space Patrol Headquarters located in Terra City. Virginia Hewitt as Carol Manning carries on an interplanetary conversation via Space-a-phone. Ed Kemmer as Commander Buzz Corry stops for a snapshot in front of the communications console. Nina Barna as Tonga (upper left) fills out the medical report as Virginia Hewitt as Carol takes the pulse of Cadet Happy, played by the incorrigible Lynn Osborn. (Photos courtesy of Andy Anderson)



tor would have done—as well, or worse, or better. It's a moot thing [very softly]. . . I'm the one who did it."

**Y**ou could cut the tension on the ABC sound stage with an atomo-torch as the familiar SPAAAAAAACE PATROL! bent the air waves, intoned by announcer Dick Tufeld or Jack Narz.

"High adventure in the wild, vast reaches of space. Missions of daring in the name of interplanetary justice. Travel into the future with Buzz Corry. Commander-in-Chief of the SPAAAAAAACE PATROL!"

Director Dick Darley: "Everything was happening fast, the equipment was whirling around. . . . You just had to ignore all that and be where you were supposed to be and talk when you were supposed to talk."

But even if you were where you were supposed to be, maybe the camera wasn't. "Cameras can get tied up where they can't make it; they run over cable, and someone has to rush over and get the pedestal off the cable, so they're late getting to a scene," says Kemmer. "So, instead of making the cross you're supposed to make to the camera that isn't there, you don't go there. You have to be aware if a boom gets tied up. You can't look up at it, but you're aware of it. You see it hasn't gotten to you yet, so you hold your line. The same with the sets—you can see it start to go. If it's a rock, you let it fall [laughs], but if it's a wall, you go over and lean against it. If a key light goes out, you get to a lighted part of the set, otherwise no one can see you."

It took "the first 500 shows," Kemmer is fond of saying, before fast



Photo: Lyn Osborn as Space Patrol Cadet Happy shares the controls with another aspiring cadet from the U.S. Civil Air Patrol in this rare publicity shot. (Photo courtesy of Beth Flood.)

footwork to compensate for blown bulbs or absentee cameras became second nature. "It takes a lot of time—you just absorb it. Hap could do it, Robbie could do it. . . . Carol and Tonga didn't seem to be quite that logical about it."

"[Really?]" utters Virginia Hewitt in amazement, when quoted Ed's remarks about split-second blocking changes and near-misses with teetering scenery. "I was never aware of any of that!"

But the hyper-alertness generated by tackling missions of daring on the set, as well as in the name of interplanetary

justice, imbued the show with an almost eerie inner reality—a magic that glows off the kinescopes after thirty years. "You won't get the same thing in a filmed show," says Kemmer. "Energy can come from total fear, but, boy, is it energy—I mean, the adrenaline's going! In the early shows I'm sure I come off as knowing what I'm doing, but underneath I was sweating like mad, wondering what I was going to say next."

"Part of why Space Patrol had what it had was because it was live," concurs Dick Darley. "If it had been pre-taped and canned and cleaned up and made perfect, it would have been different. You were wrong out at the end of it. If everything came off well, I had a euphoric situation."

It was Lyn Osborn who phoned Ed Kemmer, a friend from the Pasadena Playhouse, to tell him that the male lead of the TV space show he was in had received his walking papers in the form of an ambassadorship to a distant planet. Was Ed interested in auditioning? "It was a break," says Kemmer, "coming right out of the Playhouse, not having to starve to death for two years, which my personality couldn't have done."

The minute he walked in, we knew he was Commander Corry," recounts Nina Bara (Tonga) in Volume I of her three-part *Space Patrol Memories* (available from Nin-Ra Enterprises, 1721 La Berranca Rd., La Canada, CA 91011). According to Bara, the actor originally cast as Space Patrol Commander-in-Chief "Kit" Corry not only didn't know his lines most of the time, but had developed the annoying habit



Photo: One of the two Ralston Rockets which toured the country during the early 50s (now owned by Robert Walker of Ghent, New York) rests in its grassy graveyard.

(Photo by Dale Ames.)



of falling asleep—on the air.

Ed took over as Kit's brother Buzz and the ratings soared. Hap, Carol, and Tonga had been in from the beginning, selected by show creator Mike Moser. (Forty-seven actors answered the casting call for Cadet Happy.) Ken Mayer dropped by the set to visit friend Don Gordon (who was playing one of the then-evil Tonga's henchmen) and was recruited to do some off-stage voices. Moser wrote Mayer in for two weeks as Major Robertson and the mail was favorable, so Robbie stayed.

Bela Kovacs, working for a radio shop, bumped into his classmate from the Playhouse, Ed Kemmer, on the street and asked, "Do you think I could get a part in the show?" Ed introduced Bela to Moser, who transformed the former minister into Prince Baccarratti, evil ruler of Planet X. Commander Corry was deluged with mail. "Please be careful," the kids wrote, "Prince Baccarratti's going to do this . . . and this!" Bela was written into eighty episodes, officially becoming associate producer when Moser died.

Kemmer and Osborn were the top paid, at eight dollars a show. "In the early days," recalls Lyn's sister, "the cast would gather at Nickodell's [a Hollywood eatery], where two would order soup and the others would stretch it out with ketchup. They were really struggling then, with not enough to eat." But the Space Patrol was a solid organization, issuing regular raises. In 1954 Hap mentioned to TV GUIDE that his cadet pay had skyrocketed to \$45,000 a year.

Meanwhile, ahead in the 30th century, the animate space junk was getting a little out of hand. You had: mild-mannered professors intent on ruling the Universe; advanced civilizations gone power-mad; underwater spaceship pirates; assorted masters of disguise and deception exporting evil into the past and future via time-machines; spacey androids; crazed scientists with Z-rays, null-rays, and detectoscopes; space spiders and other low-lives; and invisible beings up to no good in general.

All of the above clamored for state of the art special effects. But, in the lean days before the ABC network picked up the show, you had to make do with what was on hand. "Everything was B-24 surplus—all the spaceship controls came from old World War II bombers. You couldn't buy a knob for the Enterprise with what they did for five or ten dollars a show," says Ken Mayer, appreciatively.

When the 15-minute daily segment was dropped, the budget for the weekly network half-hour soared to \$25,000. Then you had a new problem: If it misfired, blew up, or fell off the string, it did so before seven million viewers.

Usually the effects came off, and were strikingly innovative for their time. "We were learning," points out Kemmer. "Remember, nobody had ten years experience in TV yet—it just wasn't there." Hardly anyone, in fact, had even used 'effects' on a live basis. Darley kept asking for a lens that would allow him to shoot people adrift in space, floating or turning upside down. Cameraman Alex Quiroga finally produced the answer: a revolving lens. If the ship was hit by a meteorite, the camera lens turned, the actors leaned from side to side, but not much else really moved. That was innovative. Before, Ken Mayer recalls, a bunch of guys just rocked the set back and forth.

Ed Kemmer: "If you can look at it today, knowing it was done thirty years ago, knowing that it was done live, knowing that you had none of the things you have today—it'll still stand up, under those conditions. But, my God, you get into a million-dollar pro-

duction with all sorts of special effects that were unknown then and [by those standards] we were very crude, very simple."

As World War II ended, pilot Dick Darley wondered what in the universe he could do to equal the thrill of flying off aircraft carriers. But when he stepped into the control booth of a live TV show in progress, "I knew in ten seconds: 'This was it.' It was doing strategy, having near misses and close calls—there was excitement to it."

The best way to start out in broadcasting, family friends advised, was to become a page at one of the networks. You had access to any office, from the president to the mailroom. So Darley took his skills in visual arts and creative writing, garnered at prestigious USC, to radio station KHJ, where he emptied wastebaskets, ran errands, and tried to type but, most important, hung around



Photo: Ed Kemmer and Lyn Osborn search for some answers in the star chart room of Space Patrol's Terra City headquarters. (Photo courtesy of Andy Andersen.)

the TV office at 1313 N. Vine Street in Hollywood, home of the Don Lee Radio Network.

It wasn't long before he attracted a mentor among the higher-ups. E. Carlton Winckler (who later worked on *Space Patrol*) put him to work as a stage manager at W6XAO on Mount Lee, the network's fledgling TV station. Soon he was directing, driving up to the top of the mountain every night, five shows a night, five nights a week. Darley opened a network affiliate in San Diego, then demoted himself to stage manager to snare a job at ABC in Hollywood. Within two weeks he was directing again; in 1950 ABC assigned him *Space Patrol*.

"I didn't want any part of it," Darley has an open voice, direct. "I was on my way up in dramatic shows—action, adventure. But somebody told me to do it, and I was on the staff and sort of had to do what they gave me . . ."

Once *Space Patrol* got under way, he admits, he got more into it. "I tried to make it look like a movie every time, as best I could with live cameras, tried to get a lot of close-ups, reactions." At times he'd "get in super-close on the face and read the eyes." Darley credits the regular cast with evolving the central characters, based, of course, on Norman Jolley's scripting. ("We knew our characters," confirmed Ken Mayer. "I'd change my dialogue in rehearsal if I felt Robbie wouldn't say that.")

Darley: "My concern was in developing each week's plot and what [the characters'] reactions would be to that story. If it didn't originate from them, I tried to help. But [in overall characterization] they found their ways individually. What I did was turn the volume up or down, sharper or softer, to emotionally feature with the camera what should be featured to make it stronger dramatically. I was helped by the terrible thing of being a perfectionist [the bane of most people who've worked with me]; I beat everybody to death to make it perfect. I ran a tight ship in regard to rehearsals and staging and action and so on, but the people got through all that. I mean, they got past me."

Ed Kemmer was Darley's right-hand man on the set. "I had a friend in Ed. We were the most nearly alike—both had been in the war as pilots, both rather 'straight.' We concentrated on what we were doing in a business-like way—not always the most fun-to-do show biz. Somebody had to be a bastard, so I was elected, but I needed all the control-help I could get, and I could count on Ed. He'd have studied his lines; he'd know his stuff. If somebody in the cast was acting up, we'd talk to them in concert. I could depend on him in terms of getting the damn thing on and off the air; I

was grateful he was in the cast."

"I think when they cast the part of Corry they were looking for someone solid who could hold things together," acknowledges Kemmer, "and I accepted a big chunk of that responsibility. It wouldn't have taken much for any of those shows to fall right in—and Dick would have had nothing to photograph."

Guest actors frequently buckled under the pressure of the fast-paced show, blowing lines, going blank, or skipping scenes entirely. Says Kemmer: "You could see that curtain—it's actually like a curtain—come down in front of them. I'd look at their faces and know they couldn't tell me their own names; I



Photo: Tonga (Nina Bara) and Major Robertson (Ken Mayer) communicate over cosmic distances on their styrofoam *Space-o-phone*. (Photo courtesy Jean-Nöel Bassior.)

mean, they didn't know what to say next if their lives depended on it. Often the whole scene had to be finished by Hap and me, because they were 'gone', totally gone. Or had jumped to another scene, three scenes later. You had to jump right in on top of them and bring them back. It happened many, many times."

The regulars got used to covering. It meant not only learning their own lines, but everyone else's. "You'd pick up their dialogue," continues Kemmer, "give them part of their speech. And you'd better know about what they're going to say, because the show can't stop. Put it in the form of a question if they're supposed to tell you something: 'Well, how far away from Mars could we be—about 20 million DU's? They'd generally pick it up: 'Yeah, that's right! Just about 20 million.'"

But one time the lead heavy went totally blank and didn't recover. "We had to ad lib twenty-six minutes," says Ken Mayer, "so we made him into a telepathist."

The cast stood by again and again as shaken actors stalked from the set. Kemmer mimics: "I will never, ever, in my life—EVER—do another live TV show. This is my first and last! They were sweating blood, and meaning it."

Some guest actors went on to giant careers, like Lee Van Cleef, Marvin Miller, Gene Barry. "It was interesting seeing them move on," says Darley. "Occasionally, a peripheral character would let you know he had other jobs which were more important. Years later, they were proud to say they'd been on *Space Patrol*."

Darley and Kemmer checked and double-checked effects and technical details (particularly in Kemmer's case, where safety was involved), but sometimes the Force just wasn't with them. Darley's favorite fiasco occurred during one of the locally-aired shows.

"We made a recording of the introspective thoughts of a guy who'd been set adrift in space by the villains. He was not one of your stellar performers, so after many takes without emotion, I had him hang from a light tower, feet off the floor, until he started to shake. Then I recorded the lines. Well, they were pretty emotional!"

Air time. Suspense builds as Darley cuts from the actor helplessly adrift, to Buzz and Hap rushing to the rescue, to the bad guys escaping, back and forth, building, building . . . Time for the soundtrack of the poor victim's thoughts.

"I cued the recording, had a full headset on the screen. Well, the audio guy had gotten two tapes mixed up, and suddenly, on the air [before greater Los Angeles] goes the full orchestra and chorus of the Dinah Shore show singing 'See the USA in your Chevrolet.' Darley fell off his chair, laughing in spite of it all. 'It was the daily show, so there's no kinescope. But I'll always have it!'"

Ed Kemmer took no chances. Especially with weapons. Later, after *Space Patrol*, that care paid off when, in a detective drama, he refused to have a gun loaded with blanks fired near his head. As he tells it, "The director yelled, 'You're foolish', grabbed the gun, turned on his first assistant, and fired. A wad hit him in the skull; they had to cut it out." But anyway, before all that, one day back in Cydonia, a part of Venus ruled by Amazon-type women, his luck ran out. "They tied me to a tree and had a crossbow aimed at me. I remember telling the special effects man—good man, too—to safety it. He said, 'Oh, no one's going to touch the trigger,

"According to *Space Patrol* historians kinescopes were made of the daily shows but most have been lost or destroyed."

and also, it won't shoot hard! And then, by God, someone *did* bump that thing, and it did hit me—" (in what's politely termed 'three feet below the head'). "It wasn't that painful. I was more surprised than anything else, but it was an embarrassing shot." It was also live TV, from coast to coast. Darley kept all camera shots above the waist.

You had little, forgettable incidents, all aired, like the kittens walking across the hull of the spaceship, Endurium door handles coming off in your hand, and Lyn Osborn, being funny as usual, unzipping Tonga's uniform from behind, so she had to back off the set. And everyone cracked up at least once on camera and had to turn their backs until they regained composure. But not everyone got to spend an entire show unconscious. . . .

"**P**rince Baccarratti (Bela Kovacs) was supposed to pick up a balsa-wood wrench and knock me to the ground." Ken Mayer smiles with Robbie's ease, and tries to get comfortable in a chair too small for his present-day bulk.

Kovacs grabbed the wrong prop, a solid 4 x 12, and brought it down, hard. "My last words were, 'Commander, help!' And I passed out for the rest of the show."

Mayer is proud that he delivered his lines as he slumped to the floor. He shares the laugh again with wife Ruth, across the table at The Melting Pot, a West Hollywood cafe. ("She's his biggest fan. It's like they just met yesterday," marvels an acquaintance.)

"What really bothers me most," begins Mayer, with frankness that knocks you out almost as efficiently as a 4 x 12, "is looking at myself in *Space Patrol* episodes from thirty years ago, 178 pounds. . . ."

RUTH: "You're still handsome, honey."

MAYER: ". . . I know the show *did* touch a lot of lives—people in the space program today. . . ."

RUTH: "We're often in a supermarket and people recognize him."

MAYER: ". . . and there were a lot of things about Robbie. One was, he was the most *human* of them all: He could be a hero, a dolt, he could run the gamut. . . ."

He was, above all, reliable, the interviewer suggests. It was almost as if Robbie *had* to be there.

RUTH: "That's right."

MAYER: "I wish I had known how really important I was to the show at the time."

Breakfast arrives, and Mayer shoves aside his Pall Malls and digs in.

MAYER: "I'm a reacting actor. I don't really plan what I do; I play off what

you do. Brought this along. . . ." (pulls out a review of his latest role in *The Odd Couple*, staged at a local dinner theater.)

Ken Mayer, a skilled veteran of theater, is a natural for the role of 'Oscar' . . . Chances are he's a natural for any role he essays.

RUTH: "That's from DRAMA-LOGUE, one of the biggest papers here." She looks at him appreciatively.

MAYER: "I guess I'm the kind of guy who goes along with the breeze. When the time comes, this or that will happen. I'm a big believer in the Boy Upstairs, and I've been lucky in a lot of ways (returns Ruth's tender gaze). We've been up and down together for

forty-two years, but we've made it. . . ."

Beginnings were tough. Ruth worked as a waitress at a place on Hollywood and Vine, while Ken struggled through broadcasting school in an attempt to cure a speech impediment resulting from a back injury in the service. He fell in love with theater, studied acting, nabbed the part of Major Robertson in *Space Patrol*. . . .

"We still had some starving days after *Space Patrol*," admits Ruth candidly. But Mayer worked steadily over the years, appearing in hundreds of TV shows, films, commercials. Some windfalls came along, like the role of 'Tex', spokesman for Monroe shock-



Photo: Ed Kemmer and Ken Mayer can only watch as Virginia Hewitt and Nina Barasie for the attention of impishly handsome Lyn Osborn. (Photo courtesy of Jean-Nöl Bassior.)

absorbers.

MAYER: "Friends of mine have become stars. They're all divorced, have lost their families. I look at it this way: You go in, you do a show, you know maybe you're a better actor than [the lead], and it kind of eats at you . . . But the reason you're not a star is because that's not your big thing in life. I love theater. Now I'll be doing more theater, branching into musicals. I'll do it for nothing if I like a role . . . I just started vocal lessons. They've offered me 'Te-ya' in *Fiddler on the Roof* three times . . ."

RUTH: "He's so colorful. When he's on stage, I don't know how he does it. He's really great on stage. He's not Ken Mayer."

MAYER: "I've come close a lot of times. I was offered a play in New York once. We needed money then, but when I found out how little they were paying, I declined. I didn't take the chance. That opportunity would have fulfilled a dream."

RUTH: "That's still one of your dreams."

MAYER: "I'd love to be in theater every night."

Mayer succumbed to a heart attack on January 30, 1985.

"Ken . . . good solid actor . . . very dependable. Boy, that helped," asserts Ed Kemmer. But steady Major Robertson was not above a few pranks, under Cadet Happy's devilish influence. The Commander, who was always explaining technical things about hyper-space and time warps and magnetic force control, had a habit of pasting his lines all over the spaceship. "So," said Mayer, in his last interview, "one day Hap and I just went in after rehearsal and moved Ed's dialogue to different parts of the ship, just mixed it up,"—resulting, no doubt, in an interesting show.

Actor/writer Maurice Hill remembers: "They'd get the script so late—at 4:30 for a 5:45 show. They had to have lines all over the place; it was understandable. (According to Darley, dialogue was plastered everywhere—even on the backs of hands.) Hill came aboard to assist chief writer Norman Jolley "who was about to go off into space himself," hammering out 83,000 words a week. Jolley delegated the five daily shows to Hill. "When I came in, he was going crazy; settling down to just the weekly show must have been a great relief."

Once Hill submitted a story where the ship caught fire—but he noted that cues went up all over the ship's walls, just the same. "The rehearsal went fine," he recalls, "but when the real show went on, real smoke obliterated all the lines. They were desperately trying to clear the smoke away so they could read what they had to say next."

Even the Commander broke the tension with a prank now and then, and when Kemmer planned a joke, he did it with the same care with which he executed everything. "I scared Dick Darley to death once," he admits flinchingly. "I planted some 'blood'—a thick red liquid—in a make-up cap behind a rock where I knew I was going to roll after being hit very hard in the face." Kemmer didn't waste this one on a dress rehearsal; he saved it for the show. "I took the hit and did a real good roll back to that rock and, behind the rock, I smeared the 'blood,' and I came up . . ." One assumes that a shocked Darley fell off his chair a second time.

But, once in a while, the pressure was so intense that even Kemmer cracked. "We were doing a teaser for next week's show. We'd just come off the FIGHT SCENE [raises his voice dramatically] and the COMMERCIAL . . ." It was one of those hectic transitions. "And in the teaser, Hap says, 'Where are we going now, Commander?' And my answer was, 'Well, first we're going to go—' And I had a long, long phrase, a complicated bunch of foreign-sounding names of planets; it was like using medical language." Kemmer suddenly had no idea where they were going.

"So I said, authoritatively: 'Well, first we're going to SNANTOGOVAN-ISNODOURNOW.' I just double-talked. And I looked very serious. Well, it could have fit, but Hap just wouldn't let it go. He had to react. So, instead of playing it straight, he gave me this s-o-w take, like 'Where the hell is that?' I stayed very serious until we went to black. And then I died, Hap died, the cameraman died, and Darley boomed out over the bullhorn: 'WHERE ARE YOU GOING, CORRY?'"

Everyone has their favorite story about how they got even with Hap. "He could make a joke that might throw someone off—just for the laugh; and it would be very funny, but Oh God, people are dying in the meantime." Ed Kemmer's eyes are mischievous. "We had this sound man—jolly, marvelous guy—but Hap would make him look bad. In a fight scene you swing and, of course, you miss." [Kemmer smacks fist into palm and jerks his head back.] "As the other guy throws his head back, the sound man does THIS with a piece of leather [first his palm]; he times it."

"Well, Hap would time his moves so that the sound would happen before or after he threw his punch, and the sound man would say 'You son of a bitch,' because he needs a rehearsal as much as we do. Or, we'd be in a hollow tunnel, where you were supposed to hear sound reverberating, and Hap would do a little dance and not put his foot down—but you'd hear the sound."

So once announced Dick Tufeld, wearing a horrible Frankenstein mask,

crawled into a mummy case that Hap had to open; and once the cast nonchalantly broke for lunch 'forgetting' Cadet Happy adrift in a spaceship, dangling by piano wire from the rafters . . . And once Dick Darley, with the aid of the piqued sound man, really got even.

Lyn was like an accident waiting to happen—the smart-aleck of all time; and I really had a problem, because it was his magic that kept a lot of the humanness in the show. I didn't want to drown that. On the other hand, I had to get the show on."

One day Darley felt pushed to the limit.

"We were rehearsing an episode where they'd found some artifacts from the 20th century—old-time Earth weapons, pistols. So Hap is screwing around, screwing around, sticking the gun in his mouth, his ear, horsing around . . ." Darley told the sound man: "I've got to settle him down. Next time he points it anywhere near his head, fire off a gun."

Ed Kemmer was watching. "He's doing a dumb thing, looking down the barrel—" [flowers voice to a whisper] "And the sound man [sneaks up], and fires a shot right close behind him. Well! Hap was really flipped on that one."

"The kid was scared to death," adds Darley affably. "It straightened him out for the rest of the day. Those were the kinds of things you had to do."

"I'd argue with him. He was strong in his way; I was strong in mine. Later on, as he developed discipline, he was able to appreciate the need for it and still keep that marvelous character he had going. We worked it out, became good friends."

Ed Kemmer got even off the set. There was a party one night at Kemmer's home, and the Commander had been boning up on hypnosis in his off-hours. That night he hypnotized four or five people, having fun with post-hypnotic suggestion, "simple, harmless things. I hypnotized Hap, but he never believed he was under." Everyone went home at 1 or 2 A.M. Kemmer sat up waiting.

"Well, about an hour later, he pulls into the driveway. I open the door. He says 'You son of a gun,' goes into my den, opens my desk drawer, pulls out a deck of cards, gets out the ace, and says 'There, damn it!' And goes home. I'd suggested he'd have to come back, do all that, and then he could go home and sleep. That's the biggest trick I ever played on him, and he never forgot it."

(To be continued)

The conclusion of *Space Patrol: Missions of Daring in the Name of Early Television* will appear in the next issue of *FILMFAX* and will focus on the women of *Space Patrol*, the tragic death of actor Lyn Osborne and the lasting effects of *Space Patrol* on American culture. ★

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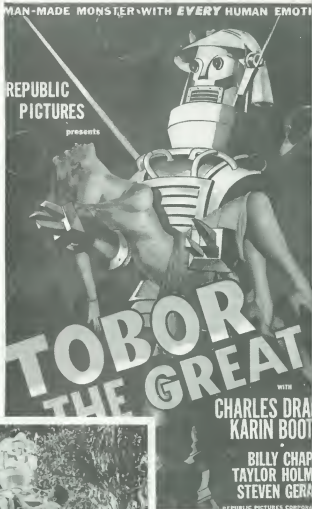
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## A Kid, his Robot And some Dirty Rotten Commie Spies add up to Fun in the 50s

Article by **BILL WARREN**

**R**obots and little boys seem to go together the way horses and little girls do. In **TOBOR THE GREAT**, **THE INVISIBLE BOY**, **THE COLOSSUS OF NEW YORK** (1958) and innumerable Japanese television shows and movies, little boys and robots form fast friendships. It's probably because robots seem a great deal like large, powerful mechanical toys, and mechanical toys are generally the province of little boys. Whatever the cause, it is an authentic tendency in movies.

**TOBOR THE GREAT** was first announced in late 1952 and early 1953. At that time, said the *Hollywood Reporter*, Carl Dudley, president of Dudley Pictures Corp., signed Edward Ludwig to direct **TOBOR**, "a science fiction drama which Richard Goldstone will produce for the company in Vistarama (a wide-screen process) and Eastman color." The movie was to be about "an automatic pilot for space ships," and Richard Carlson was penciled in as the leading man. By the time **TOBOR THE GREAT** was released by Republic, Edward Ludwig had been replaced by Lee "Roll 'em" Sholem, and Richard Carlson by Charles Drake. It was in



black and white rather than color, and it was in the standard 1-1.66 aspect ratio, rather than Vistarama's ribbon-like 1-2.66 ratio.

The storyline of **TOBOR THE GREAT** was designed to appeal to kids, and when I saw it at the age of eleven, it appealed to me. Disillusioned Dr. Ralph Harrison (Charles Drake) has resigned from the government space agency, fearing that the incredible stresses of space travel will never allow



*Photos: Opposite page top, the 1954 poster artwork for **TOBOR THE GREAT** followed the traditional ad guidelines for "sci-fi" movies of the time (a sexy girl in the arms of a menacing robot) but grossly misinterpreted the pre-teen tane of the actual storyline. As seen at lower left, Tobor would rather carry children to safety than damsel in danger. This page, top down, Tobor suffers "sensory overload" during an intense training exercise at the viewscreen simulator and goes out of control in Prof. Nordstrom's basement lab. Gadge rushes to comfort the confused metalman, only to be knocked unconscious by Tobor's flailing arms. Atoning for past mistakes, Tobor races to Gadge's rescue in a borrowed Army jeep.*

people to ride rockets to the stars. Prof. Nordstrom (Taylor Holmes) invites Harrison to his gadget-laden home to see his answer to this perplexing problem. They are followed by a man who is clearly a spy. Nordstrom introduces Harrison to the love interest, his widowed daughter Janice Roberts (Karin Booth), and her son "Gadge" (Billy Chapin), who is himself a scientific genius. He demonstrates this at once, by proving to Dr. Nordstrom he has fig-

ured out the secret method of opening the locked door to Nordstrom's basement lab, where he has been working on a secret project. At a press conference, Nordstrom demonstrates to the astonished people who have gathered—including the dirtyratcommiespy—his robot, Tobor. "A little childish joke on my part—Tobor is robot spelled backwards." Ha ha. But I thought it was terrific in 1954, and despite weeks of longing to see the film, I hadn't fig-

**BILL WARREN** is a freelance writer based in California. His reference book **KEEP WATCHING THE SKIES!** (*American Science Fiction Movies of the Fifties: Volume 1 1950-1957* (McFarland 1982)) is highly respected among genre film fans. Volume 2 is now being readied for publication. Bill is currently the film columnist for a new science fiction magazine **TO THE STARS** and has contributed to the Stephen King reference book **FEAR ITSELF**.

ured out that childish joke.

Tobor is more than a machine man, despite his cumbersome, over-sized form and bucket head. He has an elementary form of ESP, and responds to affection and hatred appropriately. Naturally, for those of us kids in the audience, it was only a matter of time before Gadge and Tobor would become good buddies. Gadge didn't waste our time. Against orders, he sneaks downstairs later and uses the gun-like apparatus that unveils Tobor from the cylinder housing him, whereupon an overhead crane carries the big silver robot toward the astonished boy. And in delighted fear, he forgets everything he ever knew about science. For no good reason except to provide a few thrills and laughs, Tobor stomps upstairs and wrecks the living room before Gadge can get the machine back in place.

Soon, the commiespies capture Nordstrom and Gadge, and in an effort to force all of Nordstrom's secrets out of him, threaten to burn Gadge's back with a blowtorch. This was pretty heavy stuff for us kids in the audience, and our backs crawled in sympathy. But the resourceful Nordstrom had previously prepared a smaller version of his Tobor controller, and installed it in a mechanical pencil. While he pretends to write out all the secrets of his machine, he is actually calling Tobor, who bursts his bonds, grabs a jeep and sets out in pursuit of his creator and his little friend. However, the head bad guy notices the way Nordstrom is fiddling with the pencil, and destroys it. Tobor comes to a halt. Dr. Harrison, who with Army personnel has been following Tobor from a distance, realizing the robot is tracing the kidnapped pair, proves he's not a total cipher in the picture by raising an antenna on Tobor's head. At once, Tobor sets out again, this time summoned by Gadge.

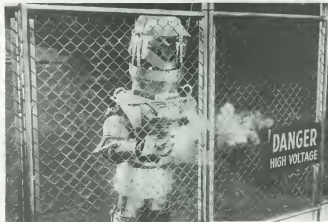
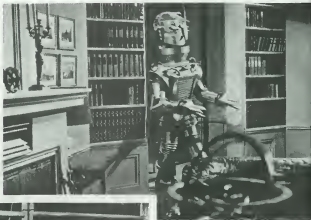
Meanwhile, back at the hideout, Gadge sweats as he secretly summons Tobor telepathically. In a rather farcical battle, the big robot (played by Lew Smith, who must have been very strong) crashes into the abandoned barn, rounds

up the bad guys—he tweaks Henry Kulky's nose—and all is right with the world. After the scientists give Tobor an opportunity to pet Gadge, which the robot earlier had shown an inclination to do, the erstwhile heroes rather ungratefully put Tobor in a rocket and blast him into space. No one even suggests that he might eventually return.

This insensitive ending so shocked me that I tried to imagine that I saw a Gadge-sized Tobor there beside the boy. Why the producers would end a film featuring an extremely sympathetic robot with essentially its destruction is incomprehensible. They must not have known what they were doing.

Reviews were not very favorable, as you might expect. *Variety's* "Art" said, "There's science fiction and then there's melodrama awkwardly clothed in pseudo-scientific trappings . . . TOBOR THE GREAT is number two, overlooking the original but brief scientific theme for cops-and-robbers hokum. A talky story and moderate acting leave product to best serve as supporting feature fare." *The Monthly Film Bulletin* was more favorable. "An outlandish but not disagreeable piece of science fiction. After a good opening, using a 'March of Time' style commentary and library material of rocket launchings, it quickly degenerates, however, to the level of boy's magazine adventure." The reviewer also pointed out that as a robot, Tobor is not very well designed. All of this is undoubtedly true, and for the unconverted, TOBOR THE GREAT is probably pretty tough sledding. Don Willis, in *Horror and Science Fiction Films*, dismisses it tersely. "Dull gimmicks, dumb 'boy and his robot' plot."

But I saw TOBOR THE GREAT when I was eleven and never since;\* I recall details more clearly than I do



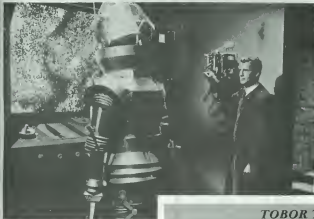
from much more "significant" films of the same era. What everyone is either overlooking or considers unimportant is that TOBOR THE GREAT actually was made for children. It was probably the first science fiction film so designed, and by that token can probably be considered the first step on the road that led to TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE (1959). The peculiar appeal of science fiction for children, who were the most enthusiastic audience for even the most adult of the SF films during this period, didn't go unnoticed by

*\*Editor's note: During a recent phone conversation, Mr. Warren commented that he had just seen TOBOR again for the first time in 32 years and was pleasantly satisfied that his initial opinions of the film remained unchanged.*





Photos: Opposite page, top down, Gadge (Billy Chapman) attempts to stop Tobor from trashing his Grandfather's living room. Tobor lumbers through the secret door into Prof. Nordstrom's study. Tobor shorts out an electrified fence on his way to rescue Gadge from commie spies. This page, top down, Professor Nordstrom (Taylor Holmes) admonishes Gadge for disobeying orders and tampering with Tobor's telepathic control gun while Dr. Harrison (Charles Drake), Janice Roberts (Karin Booth) and Carl (Franz Roehn) look on.



those who made **TOBOR THE GREAT**. The film can be criticized for being ineptly made in several ways, but it shouldn't be criticized for not being something it was not trying to be.

You can complain about the direction of Lee Sholem, never anything more than workmanlike. The editing is inept. But **TOBOR THE GREAT** was, in some ways, a pioneer. Children loved science fiction and they loved robots. This was a film for and about them, and for kids under twelve in 1954, **TOBOR THE GREAT** was probably just about flawless—except for that insensitive ending. So it doesn't hold up today; so it wasn't made for adults. So what. Entertainment of and for the moment is also worthwhile in its moment; **TOBOR THE GREAT** was certainly that.

However, the story of this robot doesn't end with the movie. In 1965, Los Angeles antique dealer John T. Shiels bought the big prop at an auction; it was in a large closed box, and Shiels said he had no idea what he had purchased until the next morning. He was quite delighted; the box cost him only \$30 plus hauling charges, and he realized he could probably get as much as \$5,000 for Tobor. A restaurant owner had already offered Shiels \$1,000, but he decided to hold out for more. Movie producers considered using the robot in a new movie, and one actor wanted to rent Tobor for the night just for the publicity. The heavy costume stood outside Shiels' shop, and apparently proved too attractive for some thief or collector. Someone stole Tobor the Great a few weeks after Shiels bought him, and the robot has never been seen again. He was probably broken down and melted for the aluminum, plastic and steel he was made of, and so is lost forever. But it would be nice to think that some kid who had fallen in love with Tobor in 1954 decided he just couldn't live without Gadge's old friend and that somewhere, Tobor stands in the corner of the living room of a boy who loved robots. ★

## TOBOR THE GREAT

Credits

A Dudley Pictures production/A Republic Pictures release  
(1959)

### CAST:

Gadge Robertson	Billy Chapin
Dr. Nordstrom	Taylor Holmes
Dr. Ralph Harrison	Charles Drake
Tobor	Lew Smith
Janice Robertson	Karin Booth
Man with rimless glasses	Steven Geray
Paul	Henry Kulky
Carl	Franz Roehn
Max	Hal Baylor
Gilligan	Alan Reynolds
Dr. Gustav	Peter Bocca
Commissioner	Norman Fields
First general	Robert Shayne
Admiral	Lyle Talbot
First congressman	Emmett Vogan
Johnston	William Schallert
Secretary	Helen Winston
Scientists	Jack Daly, Maury Hill

### PRODUCTION CREDITS

Producer	Richard Goldstone
Director	Lee Sholem
Script	Philip McDonald
Story	Carl Dudley
Photography	John L. Russell, Jr.
Art Direction	Gabriel Scognamiglio
Production Supervisor	Orville Fosse
Assistant Director	Herb Mendelson
Sound	T.A. Carmen and Howard Wilson
Special Effects	Howard and Theodore Lydecker
Makeup	Bob Mark
Editor	Basil Wrangell
Music	Howard Jackson

Running Time: 77 minutes  
Released September 1, 1954 (MPA)

Director Edward Bernds Remembers  
**The Bowery Boys**



*They Were Funny  
On-Screen, but  
Working with them  
Wasn't Always a  
Barrel of Laughs*

*TED OKUDA is a Chicago-based freelancer who has contributed to numerous film publications such as CLASSIC IMAGES and BIG REEL. He is also co-author of the upcoming McFarland reference volume THE COLUMBIA COMEDY SHORTS.*





Photos: Opposite page, Hunts Hall and Leo Gorcey strike stock comic poses as Laura Mason is carried off by Cosmos the gorilla (Steve Cabert) in this publicity shot from *THE BOWERY BOYS MEET THE MONSTER* (1954). Lower left, Leo and Hunts pop their eyes in amazement after rubbing the magic lamp in this lobby card from *BOWERY TO BAGDAD* (1955). This page top, left to right, Hunts, Joan Shawlee, Leo and Eric Blore in *BOWERY TO BAGDAD* (1955). *The Boys* befriend Anaita (Laurette Luez), a shapely jungle maiden in *JUNGLE GENTS* (1954). Leo and Hunts, "the Lone Disarrangers," force bartender Bernard Gorcey to pour them a strong shot of milk in a dream sequence from *DIG THAT URANIUM* (1956). Joyce Holden remains poker-faced while super sleuths Hunts and Leo conduct an investigation in *PRIVATE EYES* (1953).

#### Article and Interview by TED OKUDA

Although the career of writer-director Edward Bernds was largely limited to medium-to-low budget fare, much of his work—especially his *Three Stooges*, *Blondie*, and *Bowery Boys* comedies—remains more fondly remembered than many of the more prestigious films of the era.

Bernds was born July 12, 1905 in Chicago, Illinois. As a teenager, he developed an avid interest in radio; after graduating high school in 1923 he went to work for WENR, a local radio station. Journeying to California in 1927, he secured a job at KELW in Burbank, but eventually returned to Chicago and found employment at WLS and WCFL.

His brief stint at WLS proved beneficial when Howard Campbell, who hired Bernds at the station, became the chief engineer at the new sound department of United Artists in Hollywood. Talk-

ing pictures had arrived and there was a mad scramble for technicians possessing any knowledge of recording sound for movies. Bernds, with his skills as a broadcast operator, was well-qualified for such a post and late in 1928 Campbell recruited Bernds to join him.

Within a year, Bernds left United Artists and went to Columbia Pictures, where he was assigned as director Frank Capra's sound man. Bernds' expertise as a recording engineer ("I was what you call a mixer; he's the head of the sound crew") and his affiliation with the Capra pictures soon earned him the title of Columbia's number one sound man. As such, he worked on some of the studio's biggest productions, including *IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT*, *TWENTIETH CENTURY*, *MR. DEEDS GOES TO TOWN*, *THE AWFUL TRUTH*, *LOST HORIZON*, *YOU*

*CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU* and *MR. SMITH GOES TO WASHINGTON*.

But Bernds' ultimate goal was to become a director, and during the mid-1940s he was given the opportunity to write and direct comedy shorts for producer Hugh McCollum's short subjects unit. Bernds turned out some of the finest two-reelers starring *The Three Stooges*, Gus Schilling & Richard Lane, Andy Clyde, and other comedians on the roster; in addition to these shorts, he soon branched out into feature films, writing and directing the later entries in the *Blondie* series starring Penny Singleton and Arthur Lake.

When Hugh McCollum was fired in 1952, Bernds also left Columbia and eventually settled at Allied Artists where he worked on several pictures, including the *Bowery Boys* comedies. Later in

Photos courtesy of Allied Artists.



Photos: Above, in his pre-directorial days, Ed Berns worked as a studio sound man. Here he explains the mysteries of his missing board to "Daddy Dumbell" on an early **LEO GORCEY** film. Right, Huntz Hall and Leo Gorcey mug it up on this lobby card from Ed Berns' **PRIVATE EYES** (1953).



the decade, Berns directed pictures for 20th Century Fox and the newly-formed American International, as well as assignments at Allied Artists; during this period he exchanged comedies in favor of westerns (**THE STORM RIDER**, **ESCAPE FROM RED ROCK**, **QUANTRILL'S RAIDERS**), science fiction films (**WORLD WITHOUT END**, **SPACE MASTER X-7**, **THE QUEEN OF OUTER SPACE**, **RETURN OF THE FLY**) and melodramas dealing with juvenile delinquency (**REFORM SCHOOL GIRL**, **JOY RIDE**, **HIGH SCHOOL HELLCATS**).

In the 1960s, Berns was reunited with The Three Stooges, directing the team in **THE THREE STOOGES MEET HERCULES**, **THE THREE STOOGES IN ORBIT**, and all of the live-action introductory segments for *The New Three Stooges*, a made-for-TV cartoon series. He also co-wrote **TICKLE ME**, a 1965 Elvis Presley vehicle. Now retired, Ed Berns resides in Van Nuys, California.

The Bowery Boys pictures, which had their origins in the earlier Dead End Kids and East Side Kids films, were a series of cheaply-made action comedies centering on the adventures of a gang of "youths" headed by Leo Gorcey ("Slip," the bull-headed leader of the pack) and Huntz Hall ("Sach," the dim-witted goof). The results were usually silly, often very funny, and always profitable. From 1953 to 1956 Ed Berns worked on eleven of these pictures. In the following interview Berns remembers, with outspoken opinion, his years with the Bowery Boys.

**FAX:** How did you wind up at Allied Artists directing Bowery Boys comedies? **BERNDS:** In November or December of 1952, Ben Schwalb, whom I had known in passing at Columbia, gave me a job directing Stanley Clements in **WHITE LIGHTNING**, an ice hockey melodrama. To this day I think it was kind of a tryout for me to see whether he wanted to entrust the Bowery Boys films to me. Everyone at Allied Artists

liked **WHITE LIGHTNING**; it was a cheap B picture melodrama, but it was made efficiently and pretty well, I think, so I passed that exam. And then Ben wanted me to write and direct **LOOSE IN LONDON** for the Bowery Boys.

**FAX:** You wrote all the Bowery Boys scripts with your close friend Elwood Ullman, a comedy writer whom you worked with at Columbia.

**BERNDS:** Elwood wrote many two-reel comedy scripts that I directed at Columbia. I brought Elwood in on the Bowery Boys deal because I've always felt that his talents and mine complemented one another. What I lacked, he had and what he lacked, I had. One thing I needed Elwood for was the professional, get-down-to-work-and-get-it-done way that he worked. In other words, it's a job and let's get at it. When I wrote scripts alone, I'd get a little mad at myself and maybe go hit some golf balls or something to escape the job.

**FAX:** Do you think your Bowery Boys comedies differed from the earlier entries?

**BERNDS:** At the time I started directing them, Ben Schwalb had just succeeded Jerry Thomas as producer of the Bowery Boys series. When Ben, Elwood and I came on the series, the interest shifted to comedy. That was Ben's influence. The melodrama theme of their early films began to wear thin. We thought that our films were better than the predecessors because ours were funnier.

**FAX:** Were you familiar with the team's brand of humor before you began working on the films?

**BERNDS:** I had never seen them before

*Photo: Because it was mistaken for a 1956 MGM production bearing the same title, the Bowery Boys comedy **HIGH SOCIETY** (1953) was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Original Story. Pictured are Leo Gorcey, Huntz Hall, Roland Keith, Gavin Gordon, and Bernard Gorcey (seated).*



# LEO GORCEY

## THE BOWERY BOYS

Huntz HALL



Photos: Left, Huntz Hall causes some heads to turn in the women's shower line in this rare lobby card from *CLIPPED WINGS* (1953). Above, a heavily made-up Huntz Hall massages Leo Gorcey's throat in this still from *ED BERND'S THE BOWERY BOYS MEETS THE MONSTERS* (1954).

I started working for Allied Artists. Ben had produced *JALOPY* before I came on the scene, so he showed us that one and another one. From those Elwood and I got all we needed to know about the Bowery Boys.

**FAX:** What was it like working at Allied Artists?

**BERNDS:** The whole lot was very family-like. The crew was top-notch, even better than Columbia. They knew they were fighting for survival and that the picture had to be good and had to be made more efficiently, so they were willing to knock themselves out for anybody who came in and directed.

For a couple of days when I first started, they were a little wary of me and I found out why later. A guy from Columbia named Ray Nazarro came to Allied Artists before I did and directed a Western. I was later told that Ray was a blamer; he blamed everybody for everything. Nobody liked him, neither the bosses nor the crew. So they were wary of me in the beginning, but I soon won over the crew and the executives. Ben was with me all the way. And Allied tried to give me better pictures—*WORLD WITHOUT END*, for example, and *NAVY WIFE* which Walter Wanger produced.

**FAX:** What was the budget and the shooting schedule for an average Bowery Boys comedy?

**BERNDS:** The budget was \$100,000 per picture. I think nearly \$50,000 went to Leo Gorcey and Huntz Hall, and the remaining \$70,000 went to make the picture. Our schedule was ten days. The funny thing is that Leo and Huntz knew they didn't dare go over schedule

because a studio like Allied Artists just would not tolerate it. But the last day was always murderous because they could indulge their mischievousness or destructiveness or whatever you want to call it and make the simplest shots seem difficult. And so we'd come up to the last day with a "cinch" day's work—an easy eight hours—and it would finally finish with an agonizing ten or eleven hours, just because they were indulging their desire to be difficult. That was the pattern every time—unless we happened to finish with a day that didn't involve that much with them, but that was very rare. Because of the nature of these pictures, they were in nearly every scene.

**FAX:** What were Leo Gorcey ("Terrence Aloysius Mahoney, a.k.a. Slip") and Huntz Hall ("Horace Debussy Jones, a.k.a. Sach") like to work with?

**BERNDS:** When it was first known that I was going to direct the Bowery Boys pictures, the Allied Artists publicity man said to me, "Tell me, are you going to direct it or referee it?" And that

pretty well expressed it. Ben, Elwood and I used to call them "The Idiots." Leo was a pig, a miserable person, but he had a lot of talent—which he eventually dissolved in alcohol. There were times when he'd have a shot of booze just before the camera started rolling. Of the two, however, I disliked Huntz the most. He was a trouble-maker. Ben used to call him the "meshugena," which is a Jewish expression meaning "crazy person."

Huntz and Leo—that was a battling relationship. I think Huntz genuinely hated Leo because, for one thing, Leo got the lion's share of the money, being more aggressive. Leo had gotten more in the Sam Katzman/East Side Kids days and that carried on to the Bowery Boys days. Ben did a great deal to equalize it; he didn't do it by taking any of Leo's money away, but he did get more for Huntz. Huntz hated Leo, but Leo in turn didn't hate Huntz; he just kind of put him down.

**FAX:** In most of the pictures, Leo re-

**Photo:** Ed Bernnd's first Bowery Boys comedy was *LOOSE IN LONDON* (1953). Seated are Leo Gorcey, Bernard Gorcey (his real-life father) and Huntz Hall. Standing are Alex Fraser, Bernie Bartlett and David Condon (Leo Gorcey's younger brother). Photo courtesy of Allied Artists.



ceived special billing, "Leo Gorcey and The Bowery Boys."

**BERNDS:** Yes; maybe he had an aggressive agent, but I think it was Leo himself. He was an aggressive, selfish guy. **FAX:** It sounds like Huntz Hall's off-screen behavior was in sharp contrast to his happy-go-lucky onscreen image.

**BERNDS:** I have a theory that comics who make their livings by being fools for their public try to get back at the world by being mean in real life, and this was certainly true of Huntz. The Three Stooges were an exception to this rule. They did not take out on the world their necessity of being fools and clowns; they were never cruel to anyone.

In all fairness to Leo and Huntz, they were creative in their own way. They were interested in the good of the picture, and there were times when they'd work a little harder if they thought they could make a comedy routine funnier. **FAX:** Leo's father, Bernard Gorcey, played Louie Dumbrowski, the owner of the sweet shop the Bowery Boys used as their headquarters. To fans, Bernard was just as much a part of the team as Huntz and Leo. What was he like?

**BERNDS:** Bernard Gorcey was a nice little man, a really dedicated ham. He always wanted more to do and be tried his best. I like any trouper—and the fact that he sometimes came in and complained that he didn't have enough to do in the script—that was not against him at all. He wanted to work and he wanted to be funny.

He wasn't treated well by Leo. Oh, there was a rough affection there, but Leo could have been kinder. Leo used to make fun of his father and put him down, making remarks like, "Hey, Pop, you really chewed up the scenery that time!" Well, dammit, when he chewed up the scenery he was often very funny and very effective. I liked it and didn't try to hold him back.

**FAX:** In the pictures you directed, the other Bowery Boys were David Gorcey ("Chuck Anderson"), who was Leo's brother, and Bennie Bartlett ("Butch Williams"). Other than filling out the team, these two really didn't have much to do.

**BERNDS:** Ben, Elwood and I used to feel kind of sorry for them; they were pushed into the background. Leo and Huntz were certainly not kind or considerate and did very little to make the boys feel less insignificant, if you know what I mean. David wasn't much of an actor; he was there mainly because he was Leo's brother. (In the Bowery Boys pictures Berns directed, David Gorcey billed himself as David Condon.) Bennie was a fair enough actor in his own right. Their deportment was exemplary. They were always on time, always prepared and responded to direction. Elwood and I tried to figure ways to give them more to do, but that was almost

impossible. If there were any juicy bits lying around, Bernard Gorcey got them. **FAX:** Several of your Bowery Boys comedies have similarities to your Three Stooges two-reelers. For instance, **THE BOWERY BOYS MEET THE MONSTERS** incorporates material from **DOPEY DICKS**, and **BOWERY TO BAGDAD** has overtones of **THREE ARABIAN NUTS**.

**BERNDS:** Oh, yes. If something is funny in one situation you can generally modify it to fit someone else. In our pictures, Huntz was the comic and Leo more the straight man. And it was very much a Stogie-like relationship.

A lot of the Stogie-type material worked well for the Bowery Boys, but some of it didn't. I tried to use the tried-and-true "clam routine" in **JUNGLE GENTS**, with wild African clams that Sach had found in the river. The special effects man rigged up the pail (which supposedly had the clams in it) elaborately, but Huntz did the routine so poorly and so unwilling, and it promised to waste so much time that I just gave up and went on to something else. I don't blame Huntz particularly; I guess it wasn't his kind of thing.

**FAX:** A couple of your Bowery Boys comedies have elements of horror and fantasy in them. In **BOWERY TO BAGDAD** the boys fall into possession of a magic lamp, complete with a genie (played by Eric More). And **THE BOWERY BOYS MEET THE MONSTERS** is probably the most famous entry in the entire series.

**BERNDS:** **THE BOWERY BOYS MEET THE MONSTERS** was the best money-maker of all of them. Something about the juxtaposition of the Bowery Boys and a bunch of monsters appealed to audiences. Actually, every Bowery Boys picture made money; even if it was a bad one, it didn't lose. Some made more money than others mainly on the basis of the title... that was Ben's theory. **THE BOWERY BOYS MEET THE MONSTERS** stood out above the others in terms of profit.

**BOWERY TO BAGDAD** is my favorite entry. When you collaborate on a script, as I did with Elwood, you never try to separate your contributions. "That was my idea, that was his..." A true collaboration should be completely unselfish. So I don't know whose idea it was to get a snooty Englishman as a genie. I loved the scene where the genie discovers he's going to be a slave of the lamp to Sach and Slip and calls them "Vacuum Head and Mr. Loud Speaker" (laughs). That's pretty juvenile isn't it?... being in love with your own stuff (laughs).

**FAX:** Not at all. There's nothing wrong with admiring a job well done, even if it's your own.

**BERNDS:** But it's up to others to decide whether it's good or not. One shouldn't

be the judge of his own work.

**FAX:** Some of the supporting players who turn up in your Bowery Boys pictures—Dick Wessel, Emil Sitka, Jean Willes—also appeared in your Columbia two-reelers. Did you have a say in the casting of the films?

**BERNDS:** Oh sure. I got a lot of cooperation from Ben. He was a wonderful guy to work with.

**FAX:** I understand that he allowed you to change the ending of **LOOSE IN LONDON** during production.

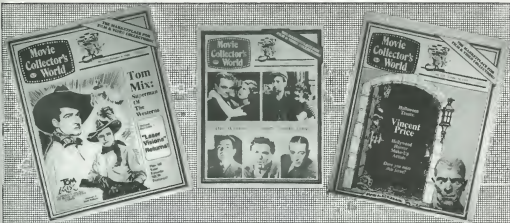
**BERNDS:** Oh, yes, the gag at the end. I was always a believer in a strong ending. If you could end with a bang you were forgiven a lot of sins you may have committed earlier in the picture. I wasn't quite satisfied with the finish we had planned for **LOOSE IN LONDON**; I wanted it to end with a bang. I got the idea for that fox hunting gag, where Sach is going back to America after learning he really isn't related to an earl. Sach says that there was one big disappointment and that was that he didn't have the opportunity to go fox hunting. And the earl says, "My dear boy, we're in the heart of London. There hasn't been a fox in this vicinity for two hundred years." Just then there's a hell of a racket—yipping and so forth—and a fox runs right in front of them, followed by a pack of fox hounds. And Sach goes into his familiar frenzy and yells, "Hi ho, the gallant fox! Tally ho, tally ho!" and runs out after them. Then the earl yells, "Sach, wait for me! Hi ho, hi ho, the gallant fox!" We cut to Slip and he looks directly at the audience as the camera dollies to a big closeup and he says, "Don't tell me they ain't related!"

So I told this idea to Ben, and he was willing to spend the extra bucks for a fox, the trainer, and a pack of hounds. That's how Ben was different from other producers—he was willing to roll the dice, willing to spend money to get an extra laugh.

**FAX:** It sounds like Ben was very concerned with the quality of the pictures. **BERNDS:** Definitely. So much so that he tended to be nervous when he watched the first cut of a picture. The first cut is generally pretty sloppy. You see, an editor is not supposed to do any real editing on his own; he's supposed to put it together the best he can, but not cut anything out, because that's the province of the producer and the director.

Most of the time, at Allied Artists anyway, we didn't have particularly good editors and they did it fast. No matter how happy I was with the picture when I finished, the first cut immediately dismayed me. In checking with other directors, I've found that this is invariably the reaction you have. The better you felt about a picture when you finished, usually the worse the first cut

(Continued on page 59)



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# PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE

Ed Wood Jr.'s Cult Classic:  
Is it Really the Worst of the Worst?

Article by ROY KINNARD

Undoubtedly the most notorious of the many bad films revived during the recent "Worst Movies" craze, *PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE* has "enjoyed" (for want of a better term) the unenviable reputation of being absolutely the "Worst of the Worst." Although applauded by its more enthusiastic fans as the most stupefying and inept movie ever made, the film seems somewhat over-rated (perhaps, one should say under-rated) and is even, in many ways, misunderstood by its admirers. This is not to say that *PLAN NINE* is by any means a good film. It is still one of the most incredibly bad movies ever concocted, but it is far from being the worst.

By now, nearly everyone with an interest in such fare is cognizant of *PLAN NINE*'s history—of how the notorious Edward D. Wood, Jr., a shadowy figure capering about on the outermost fringes of the Hollywood movie industry, raised \$800 "seed money" in anticipation of producing a film to be called *TOMB OF THE VAMPIRE*,

and convinced a down-and-out Bela Lugosi to star in it.

The tragic Lugosi, once a major star after his performance in the classic *DRACULA* (Universal, 1931), had declined steadily, both professionally and privately, since the late 1930s. Lugosi, who had starred in some of the greatest horror film classics, and who had once performed opposite Greta Garbo in *NIGHTCHICK*, descended through the sub-strata of Hollywood respectability, sinking through the mire of "B" pictures, then serials, then grade "C" pictures at Monogram and PRC, then, with finality, ended up appearing in such lurid Ed Wood efforts as *GLEN OR GLENDA* (1955) and *BRIDE OF THE MONSTER* (1955).

Having worked with Lugosi before, Wood was well aware that the actor's name would be an asset to his proposed film. Probably no other major actor had ever fallen as far—or hit the rocky bottom as painfully hard—as Lugosi, but his name on a horror film could

still pull in some box office cash and improve the picture's marketability. Unfortunately for Wood, Lugosi died only a couple of days after shooting began on *TOMB OF THE VAMPIRE*, bringing the production to a screeching halt. With no star and only a few scattered silent shots of Lugosi stalking about the countryside in his *Dracula* costume, *TOMB OF THE VAMPIRE* was through; completion of the film was impossible. But, knowing that even minimal film of Lugosi had some value, Wood filed the scenes away and, a couple of years later, devised a (somewhat dubious) use for the footage.

Obtaining financing from a Baptist Church (!), Wood began production on a film to be called *GRAVE ROBBERS FROM OUTER SPACE* (the finished movie was previewed under that title),

casting such questionable talents as Tor Johnson, an inarticulate, bald-headed wrestler with plenty of bulk but no talent; the genuinely bizarre *Vampira*, a Los Angeles television horror movie hostess whose real name was Maile Nurmi; radio announcer Dudley Manlove; colorless Mona McKinnon; and minor performers such as Gregory Walcott and Lily Talbot (both of whom, it should be said, were, and still are, decent character actors—in other films, that is). Wood devised a bizarre scenario relating the efforts of malevolent space aliens under the command of "The Ruler" (John Breckinridge) to revive deceased humans for the purpose of conquering mankind.

The sparse alien vanguard, led by the tickly-clad Eros (Dudley Manlove) and his equally tacky assistant Tanna

(Joanna Lee), land their wobbly flying saucer in a graveyard and restore to life a man and woman (Bela Lugosi and *Vampira*) who have recently died. The resurrected couple terrorize the surrounding neighborhood, and when the police investigate, the ghouls kill a police inspector (Tor Johnson), who is also revived and added to the invasion force.

Meanwhile, intergalactic jet pilot Jeff Trent (Gregory Walcott), has located the flying saucer while searching for his wife Paula (Mona McKinnon), who has been captured by the aliens. He is lured inside by the invaders, and learns of their fiendish "Plan Nine" (the use of earth's revived dead as an invasion force. (One wonders exactly what the previously unsuccessful eight plans were or why the aliens would be so persistent

ROY KINNARD is a freelance writer based in Chicago. He has written numerous articles on vintage films and is also the author of *FIFTY YEARS OF SERIAL THRILLS*, available through Scarecrow Press, and the forthcoming book, *MICHAEL CURTIZ*.

Photos: Center, the pompous alien Eros (Dudley Manlove) and his assistant Tanna (Joanna Lee) are confronted aboard their ship by police Lt. Harper (Duke Moore). Bottom left, Inspector Clay, now a zombie under the influence of *Plan 9*, terrorizes his next victim.



after so many failures.) Attempting to escape, the resourceful Trent eventually outwits the aliens, who are destroyed, the mauling ghouls perish, and the highly-touted "Plan Nine" is finally defeated.

Wood edited his existing *TOMB OF THE VAMPIRE* Bela Lugosi footage into this story, hoping to pass off the actor as one of the resurrected ghouls. The fact that Lugosi's scenes had been shot in daylight and were frequently edited into night scenes didn't seem to bother Wood, nor did he seem particularly concerned when it became necessary to enlarge Lugosi's role by replacing him with a double in many scenes—a double that bore not the slightest resemblance to Lugosi.

Released by DCA in 1959, *PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE* was an unbelievably deranged morass of ineptitude in every department. Acting, direction, dialogue, sets, continuity and special effects were all astoundingly pathetic, betraying an ignorance of even basic film-making technique. Day scenes were glaringly edited into night footage, studio lights were frequently visible on screen, hubcaps dangling on wires substituted for flying saucers, and the entire crazed mania was narrated with senile, humorless, by-the-book television psychic Criswell. About the only really good thing that could be said for *PLAN NINE* was that the photography (at least in most of the shots) was in focus.

On the film's release, the industry trade journal *Motion Picture Herald* commented: "... another in the apparently endless stream of minor-effort science-fiction. Routine screenplay casts John Breckinridge as ruler of the space people. He wants only to put into effect Plan Nine... resurrecting the earth dead with a newly-developed ray, turning them again to earthlings... the late Bela Lugosi is seen as a ghoul."

This was, to say the least, a kind review. For those who saw *PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE* when it was





first released or (very soon afterwards) on television, viewing the film was a jaw-dropping experience. The movie's only real distinction was a historical one; it marked Bela Lugosi's last screen appearance, a fact not lost on Ed Wood, who promoted *PLAN NINE* as "the great Bela Lugosi's last film." This was, of course, technically false, since Lugosi had not actually performed in the movie, only in the scant footage that Wood had previously shot for the aborted *TOMB OF THE VAMPIRE*. Nevertheless, when *PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE* premiered, Lugosi's widow, Hope Lininger, graciously consented to appear onstage with Tor Johnson.

As the years passed, *PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE* became a minor legend with horror movie fans and films buffs in general, who were well aware of the film long before it was discovered by the current crop of "bad movie" cultists. To film buffs, *PLAN NINE* was always exactly what it is: nothing much. Certainly, fans and students well-versed in cinema and film history laughed at *PLAN NINE*'s many gaffes and ineptitudes, but they always saw the film from a well-balanced perspective. *PLAN NINE* was, after all, a sub-professional effort; it wasn't even a real movie at all, merely an oddity created by amateurs who weren't involved in the mainstream film industry.

This is a distinction frequently lost on the "bad movie" cultists, who know little about film or its history, and, one suspects, care even less. In fact *PLAN*

*NINE FROM OUTER SPACE* is not even quite as bad as it's reputed to be. As inept as he was, Wood was able to stretch his almost non-existent budget by borrowing a squad car and some uniforms from the local police department with the assistance of Tor Johnson, whose son Clay was an officer. The film's graveyard scenes, shot at Quality Studios, betrayed their total cheapness in almost every shot (at times with studio backdrops and lights plainly visible), but Wood did manage, with the drifting fog and the pale, dead tree branches contrasted with black backdrops, to generate some real atmosphere. Vampira, lurking about this set, was a genuinely weird presence, and the scene depicting Tor Johnson's revival from the dead, as the immense man rises stiffly from his grave, is actually good, by far the best thing in the film. (Unfortunately, this scene is immediately followed by a laughably inept miniature shot of the gravestone falling into the open grave, but the portion of the sequence concerned with Johnson's resurrection is very effective).

These remarks are by no means made in defense of *PLAN NINE*. The film was, and remains, utter swill. But no movie containing even the scant redeeming qualities detailed above can be considered the "Worst Movie Ever Made," and perhaps the time has come for a more fair-minded reappraisal of the film. After all, one need look no further than Wood's own *GLEN OR GLENDA* to find a far worse or far more incoherent film, and *ORGY OF*



*THE DEAD* (1966), scripted by Wood and again featuring Criswell, is a far worse film than *PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE*. This repetitious, mind-numbing abomination features Criswell (whose acting, inevitably, had not improved in the intervening years) as a

sort of satanic lord of the dead, who determines the fates of damned souls as they parade before him. The "damned souls" on display, however, all seem to be third-rate strippers who proceed, one-by-one, to bare their rather shoddy wares and jiggle their wares for Criswell's scorching approval. The film, with only minor variations, continues in this manner for an hour and a half.

"Monsters to be pitied... monsters to be despised," Criswell intones at one point as he contributes his usual inanities. Indeed, but who is he referring to? The alleged "damned souls," the filmmakers, himself, or the audience? Probably the closest cinematic equivalent to novocaine ever created, with its endlessly repeated "erotic" dances producing exactly the opposite of their intended effect, *ORGY OF THE DEAD* is certainly a leading contender for the title of the "Worst Film Ever Made," and far ahead of *PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE* in the bargain.

But the question ultimately raised is: what makes a bad movie "bad"? Is it sheer cheapness or ineptitude? Certainly not. Although these qualities can be amusing to some, they do not, in themselves, necessarily result in the sort of entertaining "badness" that *PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE* is infamous for. Many cheap, inept movies commit a far greater sin—they are so dull they bore the audience. Which is worse—a movie like *PLAN NINE* or a movie like *THE OSCAR* (1966)? Those

who have seen *THE OSCAR* know well just how cuter than "bad" a bad film can be. This tale of a sleazy Hollywood heel who becomes a star and claws his way to the top of the "glass mountain of mediocrity" (as one character succinctly describes it), contains some of the most breathlessly insane dialogue ever penned ("You lie down with pigs and you come up smelling like garbage!"), as well as some of the most inept editing ever recorded by a camera. But *THE OSCAR* is no cheap-jack production in the mold of *PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE*. *THE OSCAR* was a Twentieth Century-Fox release, starring Stephen Boyd, Elke Sommer, Tony Bennett, Joseph Cotton and Jill St. John, and it was scripted by Harlan Ellison. Which is worse—a movie like *PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE*, produced with virtually no resources at its disposal, or a movie like *THE OSCAR*, made with the benefit of major studio facilities and budgeting, with name talent—or a movie like *PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE*, doomed to failure virtually from its inception?

One suspects that the "bad movie" cultists, however, are interested mainly in cheap-shot derision and insults. It is readily apparent to knowledgeable readers that many of the films commented on in "bad movie" books and articles have never been screened by the writers involved, but apparently that fact doesn't phase either the writer or their readers, who seemingly couldn't

care less about accuracy as long as they can increase the stature of their own egos by denigrating abysmal failures like Ed Wood, or the professional transgressions of a desperate actor like Bela Lugosi. In the end, the only thing there is nothing wrong with laughing at a genuinely "bad" film, but one should at least know something about the movie concerned.

In all the rush to ridicule *PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE*, everyone seems to have overlooked the fact that, regardless of the film's poor quality, the basic plot is just as good as, and even better motivated than, the plot of another low-budget film that has attained "cult" status, *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD*.

When all is said and done, *PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE*, although it doesn't entirely deserve the "honor," will probably continue to be heralded as the "Worst Movie Ever Made." As a footnote for those wondering about the eventual fates of the diverse talents involved in the creation of *PLAN NINE*, Gregory Walcott went on to appear in the early 1960s television series *87th Precinct*. Joanna Lee became a writer working in television. Vampira appeared in a few other minor roles, including an appearance in *THE MAGIC SWORD* (1962). Tor Johnson continued to lumber through a handful of low-budget science-fiction chinkers in exactly the same lobotomized fashion; it was all that he was capable of. Lyle Talbot, still active today as a character

# **PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE** (a/k/a GRAVE ROBBERS FROM OUTER SPACE) Distributors' Corporation of America (released 1959)

## **PRODUCTION CREDITS:**

Producer ..... Edward D. Wood, Jr.  
Director ..... Edward D. Wood, Jr.  
Screenplay ..... Edward D. Wood, Jr.  
Photographer ..... William Thompson  
Editor ..... Edward D. Wood, Jr.  
Music ..... Gordon Zoller  
Special effects ..... Tommy Kemp

## **CAST:**

Jeff Trent ..... Gregory Walcott  
Trent's Wife ..... Mona McKinnon  
Lieutenant Harper ..... Duke Moore  
Inspector Clay ..... Tor Johnson  
Eros ..... Dudley Manlove  
Tanya ..... Joanna Lee  
General Roberts ..... Lyle Talbot  
Ghoul Woman ..... Vampira (Malia Nurmi)  
Ghoul Man ..... Bela Lugosi  
Colonel Edwards ..... Tom Keene  
The Ruler ..... John Breckenridge  
Narrator ..... Criswell  
bit part ..... Conrad Brook  
bit part ..... Paul Marco  
Lugosi's double ..... Dr. Tom Mason

Running time: 79 minutes.

Videotape availability: The Nostalgia Merchant.



Photos: Top center, Tor Johnson menaces Dudley Manlove, as Joanna Lee and John Breckenridge attempt to bring the zombie under control with their "elephant gun." Bottom left, Lugosi's double throughout most of the film, Dr. Tom Mason, the family chiropractor, hides his face as he attempts to terrify Inspector Clay (Tor Johnson). Note the bare stage floor, lower right corner where the "grass flats" end. Lugosi in two of his few real appearances in the film, first showing his face in a graveyard insert, then hiding it during a moment of "mind" outside his house.

actor, managed to survive his encounter with Ed Wood and put the experience behind him. The remaining members of Wood's merry band have since faded into well-deserved obscurity. As for Edward D. Wood, Jr. himself, following the release of *PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE*, his already meager fortunes took a turn for the worse. Denied few additional opportunities to expand his directorial career, Wood turned his creative endeavors towards writing pornographic novels and articles, impoverished, he died of heart failure in 1978 at the age of 56, while watching a television football game.

A bizarre postscript: one of Wood's few cinematic efforts following *PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE* had been *REVENGE OF THE DEAD* (1960), a quasi-sequel to both *BRIDE OF THE MONSTER* and *PLAN NINE*. It sat unseen for decades because Wood lacked the funds to pay the lab bill. Finally, in 1983 (25 years after its production), the film was released on videotape under the title *NIGHT OF THE GHOULS*. Although it was not as engagingly insane a concoction as *PLAN NINE* or *GLEN OR GLENDA*, its long-delayed release was, nevertheless, greatly appreciated by legions of "bad movie" fanatics everywhere. ★

## SOURCEBOOK

(Continued from page 13)

least to the film-going public. But it is the producer who gets a movie made and he or she has the empty Malloxx bottles to prove it.

Industry veteran, Paul N. Lazarus (if he has produced six theatrical motion pictures (ECU, WESTWORLD, FUTURE-WORLD, CAPRICORN ONE, HAN-OVER STREET and BARBAROSA). He decided it was time to educate the public—and those seriously interested in producing—on what the movie-making is all about. The result is his book, *The Movie Producer*.

"This book," states Lazarus in the introduction, "is written for the reader seeking information on producing and on the processes at work in today's motion picture industry. It assumes the reader will not be endowed, at this stage, with the muscle or clout required to pick up the phone and talk to Robert Redford or the president of Columbia Pictures. Someone who can pull off either of these feats will have different strategies to employ than those offered in this book. The Movie Producer, finally, is for those who either want to take positive steps toward achieving this status or who simply want to know more of what it is about."

What it is "about" is work. From the initial acquisition of a property to the final production audit, the producer is a busy person. In order for the uninitiated to keep it all straight, Lazarus has divided *The Movie Producer* into three sections: development, production, and marketing. Of the three, production is the most interesting with hints on managing crew morale, collaboration with the director and how to resolve "creative differences." Keep in mind, however, that Lazarus is not a writer by trade. He is a producer and obviously loves the business. But *The Movie Producer* was not meant to be an entertaining book. It is an informative one and does a good job in that regard. There are occasional anecdotes to liven up the narrative, but you'd never mistake it for a copy of *Photoplay Magazine*.

If you're interested in what the guy does whose name comes right before the director on the credits, get a copy of *The Movie Producer*. If you're interested in becoming a producer (no degrees or licenses are required, so you've got a fair shot), get the book. But take no heed to the epilogue. Anyone who becomes a producer experiences "first hand the reasons why it is said that the making of any movie is a battle, but getting a movie made is a war."

— Sharon Williams

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## VIDEOSCAN

(Continued from page 15)

hard-bitten role with which she is often identified, Beverly Garland steals much of the show as a two-fisted, trigger-happy mad-dog killer; tossing subtlety and psychological shadings to the winds, Bev sinks her teeth into the bizarre role and provides the film with a performance that is its main appeal. Support includes Corman stock players Ed Nelson and Jonathan Haze. The long and short of it is that this picture will mean only as much to you as its packaging does. Corman fans willing to buy a barrel of apples because it might contain two or three good ones will probably want to own SWAMP DIAMONDS.

**SHE FREAK (1966)** stars Claire Brennen, Lee Raymond. Color; 87 minutes. From Magnum Video.

A lurid, fifth-rate carnival melodrama, SHE FREAK owes its infinitesimal historical significance to the fact that it is an unofficial semi-remake of Tod Browning's classic FREAKS (1932). Exactly the sort of seamy, sordid nonsense one comes to expect from '60s schlockmeister David F. Friedman, SHE FREAK unabashedly pirates the earlier film's flashback set-up and most of its plot particulars. A nasty young Texas waitress (Claire Brennen) links up with a carnival and sets romantic sights on the handsome, wealthy owner (Bill McKinney) of the freak attraction. She marries him for his money but carries on an affair with the surly young Ferris-wheel jockey (Lee Raymond) on the sly. Murder and mayhem ensue, and the freaks take revenge on the girl in a climax that will come as no surprise to those who recall Olga Baclanova's fate in FREAKS. The film is strictly amateur-night stuff, complete with awkward acting, clumsy exposition, shabby sets and drowned-out dialogue. Except for Felix Silla, once again type-cast as a midget, actual freaks are in short supply, with a handful of lumbering, pug-uglies picking up the slack. Most of the film is shot outdoors, where endless scenes of carnival activity, shot without sound and played without interest, pad the running time to a grueling 87 minutes. Timely use of your VCR's fast-forward button should cut that in half. Heeding this review will eliminate the ordeal of SHE FREAK altogether, depending, of course, on your taste for tastelessness. ★

Next issue our voracious videophile, Tom Weaver, will review RETURN OF THE VAMPIRE, 13 GHOSTS, PREHISTORIC WOMEN, CYCLOPS, STRANGLER OF THE SWAMP, and DEVIL BAT'S DAUGHTER. See you next time in FILMFAK No. 2...

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# DICK MILLER

(Continued from page 21)

giving you line readings—which I feel is a bad director—or they're the opposite, like Joe Dante. I think he's a great director. I also think he is going to get better as time goes on. Of the so-called young directors—although he's not that young anymore—I think he's the best in town.

**FAX:** Have you ever considered directing?

**MILLER:** I'd love to direct. I've written some films and had some films made, but I've only directed myself since I started in the business. You know, I'm thirty years making movies but I have yet to quote, unquote, "direct a film." I haven't pushed it too hard. I enjoy acting so much that to start on a second career, which is really what it would amount to, would take a lot of effort. Although I am getting up to the age where it might be worthwhile to put in the effort. Yes, I'd love to direct.

**FAX:** What are some of the films that you've written?

**MILLER:** I wrote a Sue Lyon's film called *FOUR RODE OUT* which was a bad film made in Spain. I did *WHICH WAY TO THE FRONT* for Jerry Lewis. Actually, I did the original. They rewrote it and even changed the war on me, but it's still mine. I also wrote some things for Roger Corman including one of his big mini-grossers called *TNT JACKSON*, a black kung-fu girl picture, and also a bunch of westerns for Texas companies. I enjoy writing but again, for some reason, I haven't branched out in that direction. There's a need for me to act so I concentrate on that area. I keep busy.

**FAX:** How would you compare working in films in the 1950s to making movies today?

**MILLER:** It's a different field. In the 50s, I both starred and acted in many low budget, independent films. Today I'm doing character parts but in huge, huge pictures. I've been fortunate to be

in pictures like *NEW YORK, NEW YORK*, *GREMLINS* and *EXPLORERS* but it's a different level. The actual work hasn't changed and I don't care if you're working on a \$100,000 picture or one for \$20 million. You sit around and wait. You shoot for 20 seconds and then you sit around and wait some more. It's a long boring process but you live for those 20 seconds of shooting time.

Making movies themselves hasn't really changed since its inception. The only new things are chemicals. They've developed faster films so they can shoot in dark rooms. And different kinds of cameras on long arms so they can get in strange little positions. But the bottom line is, you shoot a master shot and two close-ups and you've got a picture.

**FAX:** What do you do when you're not working in films?

**MILLER:** I goof off. Since I started making pictures I've never done anything that even resembled a regular job. In the bad periods, I was a hungry actor. In the good periods, I just enjoyed it. I took a straight job once at Saks Fifth Avenue in New York City but I went crazy. Only lasted about a week and a half. Don't get me wrong. Before starting in movies I had done just about every job you could possibly do. Then I rebelled. I'll be a starving actor, but I can't go back to work a straight job. I've managed, knock wood, to keep working in the business.

**FAX:** Now you're a semi-regular on the television series, *Fame*.

**MILLER:** I play Lou Mackie, the guy who owns the bowling alley and lounge where the kids hang out. So far, I've done about four episodes and there's even one where I sing in it. They've got a new season coming up. There's been no talk yet but there's a good chance I'll be back on it.

**FAX:** What's next for Dick Miller?

**MILLER:** Right at the moment, nothing. That famous word "hiatus"—meaning out of work. This is the period where I kind of kick back, hope for warm weather so I can get to the beach and sit around in my favorite restaurant drinking coffee and killing time. It's really just a waiting process until the work starts again.

**FAX:** Are you as eccentric as some of the characters you play?

**MILLER:** Maybe not too far off. How about, I'm a controlled eccentric. The characters have to come from someplace. Whenever you see a guy on the screen, no matter how good of an actor he is or how different he might want to play his role, the basis is usually his own personality. If I'm a little nuts on the screen, then I must be a little nuts in life. I think the ability to let myself free on screen, or to control myself in my daily life is the deciding factor. So, to answer your question, ya... I'm a little crazy. ★

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# BOWERY BOYS

(Continued from page 48)

looked to you. The first cut is long and slow; it obviously has no sound effects or music in it. Jesus, my spirits would fall when I'd see a first cut.

But Ben was just the opposite. The more he would look at a gag or gag sequence he liked the first couple times around, the more he would think it was no good. When you see a film over and over again, the faults magnify themselves. Ben would get so nervous he'd want to cut, cut, cut. He was a good editor, but he would get over-trained. He would even want to cut frames; we called it 'cut-itis.' It would get so that he'd have no faith in anything. We had to release sixty-seven or sixty-eight minutes or thereabouts on the Bowery Boys pictures to qualify as a legitimate second feature, and there would be times when Elwood and I said that if it were up to Ben, if he were left to his own devices, he'd finally get it down to a two-reeler.

We didn't preview the Bowery Boys pictures because it represented an extra expense. That was a shame. I've often marveled at the fact that we were permitted to preview two-reelers but not the Blondie pictures or any other feature comedies. We got a special dispensation to preview two-reelers, and boy, you needed that preview if only to reassure yourself. I tended to get a little overtrained on film too. I'd look at a picture and think maybe I hadn't done such a good job, that I should have speeded up the action. But when we previewed the two-reelers and they got a solid reaction, it reassured us and it was good for our morale.

**FAX:** There were a few Bowery Boys pictures (PARIS PLAYBOYS, HIGH SOCIETY, JAIL BUSTERS) that you wrote but didn't direct. Any reason for this?

**BERNDS:** That was because of Huntz. He was moody and if he thought he could get away with it, he'd throw his weight around. Every once in a while he decided he wouldn't have me as a director anymore, and Ben, just to appease him, brought Bill Beaudine back to direct a couple of pictures. Elwood and I wrote JAIL BUSTERS and that was one of the occasions that Huntz wanted his old buddy Bill to direct it. For one of those pictures, HIGH SOCIETY, we mistakenly received an Academy Award nomination.

**FAX:** How did that happen?

**BERNDS:** Elwood and I wrote a story for the Bowery Boys that eventually became HIGH SOCIETY, and that was one of the occasions when Huntz made such a fuss—or it might have been when I was not available. I did get other jobs; if I had something better to do, Ben was happy to let me do it. I did



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direct some bigger pictures at Allied; I just don't remember the exact circumstances.

Anyway, Elwood and I never got to the screenplay part of it, so we got story credit for *HIGH SOCIETY* and a couple of other writers (Bert Lawrence, Jerome S. Gottler) got screenplay credit. Well, a little while later, MGM produced a multimillion dollar remake of *THE PHILADELPHIA STORY* and wanted to call it *HIGH SOCIETY*. Since Allied Artists had used the title first for the Bowery Boys picture, MGM asked Allied if they could use the title for *their* picture. Allied was probably flattered at talking to the big shots at MGM and said, "Sure, go ahead, use the title." So now there were two pictures with that title: this poor little Bowery Boys film written by Elwood Ullman and Edward Bernds, and the big MGM picture.

The Academy Award nominations for writing have categories; a very skinny category is for stories written for the screen but separate from screenplay. There's usually only a half dozen or so because it's kind of a rare category; it's quite unusual for someone to write a screen story and somebody else write the screenplay. So there were only eight or ten in that particular category and *HIGH SOCIETY* stuck out like a sore thumb. All the dumb writers who voted

for that nomination thought they were voting for the MGM blockbuster; they didn't notice that it said "Allied Artists" after it. So, lo and behold, the word comes out that Elwood and I were nominated for the screen story for *HIGH SOCIETY*. Elwood was still working at Allied and I was working somewhere else when we received these plaques—scrolls mounted in frames—from the Academy, acknowledging that we were nominees for Best Motion Picture Story that year. I immediately said, "This is obviously a mistake; it's silly to let it go on. It'll just make laughing stocks of ourselves and of Allied Artists. The sooner we correct this, the better." Elwood was a little dubious; he was working for Allied and thought maybe they might treasure the nomination even if it was by mistake. So I said, "Alright, I'll call them." I called Walter Mirisch who was the head of Allied and told him that I wanted to withdraw the nomination, that it was a mistake and no use perpetuating it; he agreed. With Elwood's permission, I sent a telegram with our names on it to the Academy, withdrawing our nomination. I received a letter from the Academy thanking us, and they let us keep the plaques. I've still got mine; it's hanging on the wall at home.

That was in 1956—what a year that was for nominations in that category!

Another nominee for Best Motion Picture Story was *THE BRAVE ONE* and that was written by a member of the "Unfriendly Ten," a guy who was blacklisted and wrote it under pseudonym. The blacklisted writers were a talented bunch, by and large, and they sold their work through other people. They had to work a lot cheaper that way, but they did it. It was common knowledge in the whole industry that it was Dalton Trumbo who wrote the story for *THE BRAVE ONE* under a fictitious name. So not only were there two ineligible nominees—Elwood and myself—that year, but when *THE BRAVE ONE* eventually won the Academy Award in this category, it had been won by a person who didn't even exist! (*Author's note:* Dalton Trumbo wrote the story for *THE BRAVE ONE* under the pseudonym Robert Rich. When Robert Rich was announced as the winner for Best Motion Picture Story at that year's Academy Award ceremony, no one came forward to accept the award.)

**FAX: DIG THAT URANIUM** was the last of eight Bowery Boys comedies you directed. Any reason why this was your last one?

**BERNDS:** Well, Leo only made one more Bowery Boys picture, *CRASHING LAS VEGAS*, before he was replaced by Stanley Clements (Stanislaus Covelleske, a.k.a. "Duke").

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**BERNDS:** He was even worse on **CRASHING LAS VEGAS** than he was on **DIG THAT URANIUM**, and I believe Ben went to Walter Mirisch and said, "It won't work; he's impossible and we're going to continue this series—we've got to do it with somebody else." By that time, I wasn't on the Allied lot, so I don't know the exact mechanics of it.

**FAX:** Leo issued a statement that he was too broken up over his father's death (Bernard Gorcey died in 1955) to continue with the series.

**BERNDS:** Considering how he treated his father, I don't think that's likely. No, Leo was fired—he drank too much and he couldn't do his work anymore.

**FAX:** Have you ever seen any of those final Bowery Boys pictures with Stanley Clements?

**BERNDS:** I've seen a couple of them and they're pitiful. It absolutely didn't work. Stanley Clements—or "Stosh"—as everyone called him—was a good actor and a good friend of mine, but it was a disaster; he was too straight. He was good in comedy stuff, but he wasn't actually a comedian. I don't know whose idea it was to have him well-dressed, but it didn't fit. What would a guy who dressed well and seemed reasonably normal be doing hanging around the likes of Sach? It took a slob

like Leo to make it work and Stosh was no slob. It just goes to prove that some guys can be replaced and others can't.

**FAX:** The series came to an end in 1958. Do you think the loss of Leo Gorcey contributed to its demise?

**BERNDS:** Two things killed the series. First of all, it could not stand the loss of Gorcey. Stosh simply didn't work in Leo's place. And the other thing, of course, was television. The first thing television killed off was domestic comedy. Then the low-budget comedy series. Then the low-budget Westerns. They all went by the board because television took their place.

**FAX:** Looking back on it, did you enjoy your stay at Allied Artists?

**BERNDS:** The years I worked for Allied Artists with Ben and Elwood were some of the most pleasant years I spent in the business. The fact that Leo and Huntz were difficult didn't hurt the situation. Those were the years when I probably should have been busting my butt to get into better pictures, but it was so pleasant working for Ben, and Allied Artists in general, that maybe I didn't exert myself as much as I should have. You might say that's where my career solidified into the making 'B' pictures.

**FAX:** If it's any consolation, your 'B' pictures have remained more popular than many prestigious 'A' productions.

**BERNDS:** That's poor consolation (laughs). I would have felt better about myself if I had gotten into the big brackets, but what the hell, I don't consider my career a failure. I made a pretty good living and had a pretty good time doing it. ★

## BOWERY BOYS Filmography

All of the following were produced by Allied Artists. Unless otherwise noted, Berns directed and co-wrote these pictures:

### 1953 - LOOSE IN LONDON

CLIPPED WINGS  
(directed only)

### PRIVATE EYES

### 1954 - PARIS PLAYBOYS (co-wrote only)

### THE BOWERY BOYS MEET THE MONSTERS

### 1955 - BOWERY TO BAGDAD

HIGH SOCIETY  
(co-wrote story only)

SPY CHASERS  
(directed only)

JAIL BUSTERS  
(co-wrote only)

### 1956 - DIG THAT URANIUM (directed only)

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## TRIVIA TRIX

(From pages 8-11)

### Photo Quiz Answers

**PHOTO #1:** Shot for only \$40,000, this film was originally titled **TERROR IN THE MIDNIGHT SUN**, then retitled **INVASION OF THE ANIMAL PEOPLE**.

**PHOTO #2:** Author/screenwriter H.G. Wells is seen here visiting the set of **THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME**.

**PHOTO #3:** **THE ANGRY RED PLANET** (aka **INVASION OF MARS**) featured tentacled plants, three-eyed giants, a bat/rat/spider/crab and "solid-rized" coloration.

**PHOTO #4:** Originally 17 reels long, the German version of **METROPOLIS** was cut to 12 reels (128 min.) in England, then reduced again to 7 reels (75 min.) in America. No uncut copy of the film remains.

**PHOTO #5:** Jack Pierce created Boris Karloff's 1931 makeup for **FRANKENSTEIN**. Pierce also worked on **DRACULA**, **THE MUMMY**, **THE SON AND THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN** plus numerous other 40s monster features.

**PHOTO #6:** A young George Pal inspects some of his early Puppetoon creations. Other Pal films include: **DESTINATION MOON** (1950), **WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE** (1951), **WAR OF THE WORLDS** (1953), **CONQUEST OF SPACE** (1955).

**PHOTO #7:** Leslie Nielsen, Walter Pidgeon and Warren Stevens relax between takes on **FORBIDDEN PLANET**.

**PHOTO #8:** Willis O'Brien poses with one of the original animation armatures from his classic **KING KONG**.

**PHOTO #9:** Max Palmer, "The Tallest Man in the World," lumbered his way through **KILLER APE**.

**PHOTO #10:** Lock Martin, a seven-foot, six-inch actor and former doorman at Grauman's Chinese theater, played Gort.

**PHOTO #11:** Joan Taylor coaxes up to one of the rubbery, phallic-headed aliens from **EARTH VERSUS THE FLYING SAUCERS** (1956).



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### ABBOTT & COSTELLO: The Comedies of Charles Lamont

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From left:  
Space Cadets Roger  
Manning, Tom Corbett  
and Astro



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## Tom Corbett Remembers

By FRANKIE (TOM CORBETT) THOMAS

"Kellogg's, the greatest name in cereals presents... TOM CORBETT... SPACE CADET! This is the age of the conquest of space, 2350 A.D. The world beyond tomorrow. Here at Space Academy, U.S.A., the youth of the Universe trains for duty on distant planets. In roaring rockets, the Space Cadets blast through the millions of miles from Earth to farflung stars; to protect the liberty of the planets, safeguard the freedom of space and uphold the cause of peace throughout the Universe."

**A** Monday evening, Oct. 2, 1950, was the magic moment when the announcer intoned the above introduction for the first time. There was the picture of Tom Corbett in his dress uniform, which suddenly spun and dissolved into footage of a rocket blast-off. Television's first man in space was outward bound to provide the catalyst for the science-fiction explosion of the 50s. The interplanetary adventures of Tom had begun. No one at that time could dream how far he would go... but it didn't take long to find out.

Tom Corbett brought outer space into the

living room and he came at the right time. The soil was fertile for the Corbett craze and 1950 was the key year. This is easy to understand when we realize that we are now in the midst of the second science-fiction boom of this half of the century. The 50s was the first. *Rocketship X-M* and *Destination Moon* were both released that year. The premiere issue of *Galaxy Science Fiction Magazine* went on sale. The *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* hit the stands in late '49 and, almost a year later, was entrenched as a viable SF fantasy magazine. *Weird Science* and *Weird Fantasy* comics and a number of SF-oriented

radio shows also appeared in 1950.

### Hot as a Rocket

At the beginning of a TV series, you don't know what you've got. How can you? Audience acceptance is the deciding factor. Nowadays there are complexities: preproduction publicity; the fight for prime-time and avoidance, if possible, of heavy ratings competition. Those things didn't exist when Tom made his debut, for that was during the birth of big-time television. However, then as now, there was the eternal question of making it. Tom was unique in that there was a blueprint

of his destiny in two weeks. By that time, disc jockeys, M.C.'s and interviewers on talk shows were mouthing "Blast-off," "Go blow your jets" and what became the vocal trademark of the show, "Spaceman's luck." By the fourth week there were interviews, appearances on other programs; it was amazing. I don't believe such instant acceptance has been duplicated in the medium since. *Space Cadet* was as hot as a rocket almost from blast-off.

How did it happen? The idea sprang from a modest beginning. Rockhill, a package house whose destinies were guided by Stanley Wolfe, was tied in with the Kenyon and Eckhart advertising agency by virtue of a twice-weekly half-hour radio program called *Mark Trail*. Trail, based on a cartoon strip of the day, was sponsored by the Kellogg Company which proudly called itself "The Greatest Name in Cereals," as you may have noted from the Corbett introduction. The sands of radio were running out and the Madison Ave. boys went to Battle Creek, Michigan, (home of Kellogg) with four drawings and a story outline dealing with one Cris Colby, Space Cadet. Kellogg's went for the idea, envisioning it as a thrice-weekly, 15-minute program. Their decision might have been influenced by the fact that they had been the original sponsors of a successful radio program years before—*Buck Rogers*. Cris Colby went into the preparation stage.

Television-wise, it was all New York in those days. The medium was live; what you saw was literally what you got. The performers best equipped to cope with this new form were those with experience in the three other branches of entertainment: the legitimate stage, motion pictures and radio. There were really only about 12 actors or so in New York then who did most of the television work. I was one of them.



The novel that started it all was Robert Heinlein's *Space Cadet*, published in '48



An innovative FX technique\* allowed us to do sequences with the boys and myself floating around the control deck when the artificial gravity generator broke down."

### Spaceman's Luck

The New York stage had been the cradle of my acting career. There was "Spaceman's luck" involved, since I broke in at a time when they were writing awfully good parts for child performers. *Wednesday's Child*, the longest and most demanding role ever written for a youthful performer, had been my bel-weather. RKO bought the play for pictures and I went west to do the movie version. After that, it was Hollywood and Broadway, with 30 major studio films and 12 starring roles in the legitimate theatre. The picture period had been great. *Boys Town* with Spencer Tracy and Mickey Rooney, and *The Major and the Minor* with Ginger Rogers and Ray Milland were the biggest, I guess. But *One Foot in Heaven* with Frederic March and a few others weren't far behind. The *Nancy Drew* Series with Bonita Granville kept me busy at Warner Brothers for two years, and the title role in the serial, *Tim Tyler's Luck*, was a teenager's dream. Recently, the *Nancy Drews* have been rerun on cable TV, and *Tim Tyler* is considered a classic by serial buffs. I was certainly familiar with overhead mikes and camera technique, so the stage-type rehearsals and presentation of live TV held no terrors.

Rockhill was in a frenzy looking for their central character. Albert Aley, story supervisor, had worked out a *Three Musketeers* theme with Cris Colby closely involved with his two unit mates—Astro the Venusian, played by Al Markim, and Roger Manning, an intriguing wiseguy, played by Jan Merin. Cris was to be a sort of junior cadet with the idea of appealing mostly to the kiddie market. Dickie Moore from motion pictures—and a young chap just getting a start going on TV, Jack Lemmon—were among those considered. I had just completed 26 weeks as one of the three leads on TV's first five-a-week daytime soap opera, *Woman to Remember*. I met with Stanley Wolfe, producer Mort Abrahams, and director George Gould, early on a Friday afternoon. They introduced me to Al Markim and Jan Merin,

neither of whom I knew. At four that afternoon they phoned me at The Lambs Club with the news that the part was mine if I would do it. The Rockhill group then decided to make their hero more of a take-charge type. The name Cris Colby was changed to Tom Corbett and two weeks later we were first televised in what became our regular time slot, 6:30-6:45 p.m., Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

That is how Tom and I came together, and we stayed together so constantly and so long that I began to wonder where one left off and the other began.

### Blast-Off

That first show literally blasted off. Al Aley wrote the first nine programs which comprised a complete story and he did a great job. The introduction of Tom Corbett as a new Cadet at Space Academy 400 years in the future, along with his roommates, Roger and Astro, was established with lightning speed. Suddenly there was a runaway rocket crashing at the spaceport manned by a dying Captain Turner played by Tom Poston, later to garner fame in the comedy field. The Mercenaries from the twilight zone of that planet had a space fleet in the vicinity of the Moon. The Solar Alliance of Earth, Mars and Venus was threatened. The crisis of that first three-week storyline (a formula which we continued to follow) came when Tom Corbett and the crew of the rocket cruiser *Polaris* came to grips with the invaders. Therein lies a tale. In his long career, Tom instigated many a first, but here's certainly one that was never duplicated.

Though we aired late in the day, this was technically a children's show. The idea was to sell cornflakes. We were not blessed with a lavish budget and most of that had gone into really impressive sets insisted on by Mort Abrahams, our producer. By the end of the second week, Tom had to come in contact with a tangible menace, the Mercenaries.

This required another rocketship interior,

the control deck of the invading fleet's flagship. We didn't have money enough to build it or to hire the additional actors. The program already had a large permanent cast. In addition to the three cadets, there was their senior officer Captain Strong, Commandant of Space Academy, Commander Arkright and astro-physicist Doctor Joan Dale. Desperation is the spur of invention. During a commercial, the main deck of the *Polaris* got some frantic face-lifting and became the Mercurian flagship. As mentioned, the invaders came from the twilight zone. Since half of Mercury always faces the Sun, it is too hot and the opposite (or dark) side is too cold to sustain any kind of life. (I often wondered if the Mercurians' point of origin had any influence later on a choice of titles for one of TV's most imaginative series.) To protect their eyes, conditioned to the faint light of their home, the Mercurians had to wear face masks. *Tom Corbett* became the only show where the heroes and the villains were played by the same actors. As Tom, I was trying to frustrate the chief Mercurian played by myself. Behind the shield-like helmets and speaking an unintelligible double talk, we pulled it off. There were some amazingly fast costume changes during that Mercurian story. Things got a little less hectic after that... or did they?

I should underline one point. During its entire five years on television, *Tom* was done live. When that red light on camera-one went on, it was sink or swim. The West Coast and other outlets beyond the reach of direct transmission were serviced by kinescopes, which were no more than pictures taken of the live show as it was done. Nowadays, we don't really have live television, save at sporting events and other on-the-spot broadcasts. What we have are *midget* movies done on tape prior to broadcast. They can be edited, there is no time problem (a constant headache

during the live era) and mistakes can be deleted.

## At the Top

After 10 weeks of breathless adventure, it was obvious that *Tom* was a national figure. At that time, Milton Berle and his Texaco Show was the top-rated TV show with the largest number of outlets. ABC came to Rockhill with a tempting offer—the second largest hook-up of stations in national television. After 13 weeks, we moved from CBS to ABC. The newspapers were now making much of *Tom*—he was good copy. The leading TV columnist of the day concluded a long article on the show with: "Corbett invaded ABC only two days ago, conquering that coaxial stronghold after abandoning his original home base on CBS. The old joint got just a bit too small for *Tom*'s expanding needs." I'll bet Columbia, the leading network then, didn't take kindly to that comment.

The *Corbett* craze was not just a fortuitous blending of performers who enjoyed working together or good production values and storylines that were entertaining. The show was based very loosely on the novel *Space Cadet* by Robert Heinlein, who had cracked the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1947 with his beautifully simple, futuristic folk story, *The Green Hills of Earth*. He was an acknowledged dean of SF writers, and still is. Also, our technical advisor was Willy Ley, author of scientific works for the layman and international authority on rockets since the 1920s. Willy was dedicated to making our stories deal with scientific possibility. *Tom* was more Earth-bound than any of the space shows that followed. The Mercurians were non-terrestrial, but they came from our own solar system, and the black planet of Alkar was on the "trans-Neptune orbit." As I continued to write for the show, I realized that the limita-



Frankie Thomas had several firms to his credit before becoming *Tom Corbett*. Here he is with Ginger Rogers; he worked with her on *The Major and the Minor*.

tions of scientific probability were not uncomfortable regarding imagination. Willy, an intimate friend of Werner von Braun, thought *Tom* was placed too far in the future and that regular space travel was only 150 years ahead. I must admit that he took a dim view of the Cadets' Paralo-Ray, which froze victims into immobility with non-fatal results. Willy considered such a weapon doubtful.

We got a great deal of coverage from our realistic approach, especially from children's organizations grateful for the absence of strange monsters and a concentration on SF rather than horror. *Newsweek*'s issue of April 2, 1951, summed it up rather well in its article, "Hi-yo, *Tom Corbett*":

"*Space Cadet* generally provides its audiences with possible—though still unrealized—feats, and juvenile watchers are getting science lessons along with their entertainment. If the Moon is experimentally reached by man-carrying rockets in 25 years, as Willy Ley, the show's technical advisor, predicts, it will be rather old stuff to many of today's youngsters."

Willy isn't with us any more but he lived to see his prediction come true—sooner than even he expected. One thing is sure: In 1969, when I saw the astronauts take that giant step and walk on the Moon, their space regalia bore a remarkable resemblance to the outfits we wore on the show when operating in space and on strange planetary surfaces. It was like old home week.

## Spin-Off

At the beginning of our 14th week, and on a different network, *Tom* was estimated to have seven million viewers, enormous for that time. Everything he touched turned to gold. As indicated, the columnists took a proprietary attitude toward the show and we got



Tom operates a piece of futuristic equipment while the Cadets and Dr. Dale look on.

great coverage. I suspect that they were watching us regularly since 25 percent of our viewers were adults. Nowadays, ratings and publicity seem to be everything, but at the beginning it was sales results that told the story. Sales for Kellogg's in the areas where *Tom* was televised were running from 10 percent to 100 percent-plus over non-TV areas. Premium campaigns and merchandising gimmicks were startlingly successful as well. *Tom* carried the banner of Kellogg's "Corn Flakes" and "Pep." Not long afterward the Pep box was changed. It now read: "Pep... the Solar Cereal."—with a picture of *Tom* on the box, of course.

If you have a good idea and it works, there will be a lot of similar programs treading on your heels. So it was with us. There were a stack of them. Two were successful and wove a legend of their own.

*Captain Video* began on the Dumont network in late '49, before we reached the screens. But, as first conceived, he was not in space. The title was descriptive. *Captain Video*, from his mountain hideaway, contacted agents in the field via video and his operatives were most often Johnny Mack Brown and Tom Tyler or Hoot Gibson. It was a novel way of running old Westerns in a serial form. It wasn't until several months of success in space on the part of *Tom* and the *Polaris* crew that the good *Captain* joined the space race in his rocket, *The Galathea*.

*Space Patrol*, the third of the successful space programs, came into being on the West Coast in 1950, but did not go national until much later.

After these, the rush was on. Done live was *Rod Brown of the Rocket Rangers* and *Buck Rogers*. On film we had *Commando Cody, Captain Z-Ro*, *Flash Gordon*, *Johnny Jupiter*, *Rocky Jones*... *Space Ranger* and a telecinetic presentation, *Space Barton*. We shot them all down, though I will touch on *Rod Brown* in a moment.

Our original producer, Mort Abrahams, left us to produce an impressive nighttime anthology, *Tales of Tomorrow*, which enjoyed a good run. CBS's re-entry into SF, *Out There*, was not so fortunate.

*Tom* kept ahead of the field. Our scripts were meticulously researched and, as the critics noted: "Imagination and idealistic thinking about the world of tomorrow are in every storyline."

As the show rolled into its second year, nothing could go wrong. We were on the glory road and it seemed that *Tom* would go on forever. He was invincible.

## Merchandise

Rockhill Productions deserves a lot of credit because they knew they had a "Go-Go" property and they wasted no time. *Tom Corbett* merchandise made every in-road possible in the market including a number that *Space Patrol* and *Captain Video* would never see. There were hardcover



In 1968, when I saw the astronauts walk on the Moon, their space regalia bore a remarkable resemblance to the outfits we wore.

books, coloring books and a daily and Sunday comic strips. Grossett and Dunlap published eight *Tom Corbett* hardcovers authored by Carey Rockwell. SF fans are notorious as collectors, so I'll list the titles for you: *Stand By for Mars*, *Danger in Deep Space*, *On the Trail of the Space Pirates*, *The Space Pioneers*, *The Revolt on Venus*, *Treachery in Outer Space*, *Sabotage in Space* and *The Robot Rocket*. If you chance upon one, look uninterested, but buy it. Then don't accept the first offer—you hold dinner for a week in your hand.

There were 11 *Tom Corbett* comic books published by Dell and three more done by Prize. The first three Dell issues were beautifully rendered by Alden McWilliams, who left the job for the *Twin Earths* comic strip. Dell issues four through eight were drawn by Paul Norris, who then took over the popular *Brick Bradford* daily comic strip. Nine through 11 were created by John Lehti, who moved on to the Sunday comic strip, *Tales from the Great Book*. The Prize Publications were all drawn by Mort Meekin of *Barman* fame.

The publications, the comics, the *Tom Corbett Punch-Outs* and *Coloring Books* and *Straro Kir*, all produced by Sealfield, had to be profitable. But they were nothing compared to what came out in merchandise. We had toys coming on the market by 1950, all preceded by the name *Tom Corbett*: Space Academy Set (Mars toys) Lunch Box and Hot Mug (Aladdin), Rifle, Flashlight Gun, 3-Way Space Phone (Zimmerman), 3-Power Field Glasses (Herold), Wrist Watch (Ingram), Moulding and Coloring Set (Model Craft), Official Outfit (Yankiboy), Space Cadet Hat (Lee), Comic Vision Helmet (Practi-Col)... I still haven't touched the surface. There were 185 items.

Take the Mars Toys Space Academy set. If you can buy one for \$100, grab it. If you collect *Corbett*, the Flashlight Gun is indispensable. The Yankiboy Official Outfit was more than a \$50 item when it first came out in those happy, non-inflated days. What it would bring now, I don't know. Two years ago at the Houston Con I was offered \$1,000 for my original tunic. I declined on the theory that I might just be buried in it.

## Innovation

In recounting the life and times of the invincible hero and friends, I must make mention of an excellent article in *STARLOG*, #9, by David Smith. It was aptly titled, "Vintage Video: The Golden Decade of SF Viewing." It informed me that *Captain Video* shot their special effects first and then added them to the live show, something I had never known. Save for the rocket film at the opening, *Tom* was live all the way. Yet the *Polaris* crew was shown walking on the exterior of the rocket cruiser and it looked like the flight deck of an aircraft carrier. Actually, it was a three-foot wooden rocket shot with magnification. We were on another set, shot in miniature and super-imposed over the model shot. There was a problem here since, with one film running on top of the other, there was a depth distortion. But nothing remained a problem on *Tom Corbett* for long. Our cast and crew as well were believers. The impossible just took a little time. So our director, George Gould, and our control-room group developed the matting amplifier with which an electronic void was created in one film and the other picture was placed inside it. This technical advance, originated on *Tom*, allowed us to do elaborate sequences with *Captain Strong*, the boys and myself floating around the control deck when the artificial gravity generator broke down. Later, Doctor Joan Dale invented Hyper-Drive, which allowed the *Polaris* to journey into the galaxy. Does that remind you of anything? We had quite a time on a planet inhabited by dinosaurs and other giant reptiles. The effects were great and I'm proud of them, but I should mention that *Tom* was not a gimmick show. The hardware and indications of advanced technology were adjuncts. It was space adventure based on conflict and the relationship between *Tom* and his unit mates.

Finally, in our fifth year, after a series of station and sponsor changes, *Tom* returned to NBC for a season of half-hour, weekly adventures sponsored by the Kraft Company. This marked *Tom*'s last flight, but four sponsors and four networks must set some kind of a record. Actually, he could have gone on. There were overtures to syndicate the show, but I couldn't see it. *Tom* had blasted into being with one of the biggest sponsors, Kellogg, and had closed out with another, Kraft. He had led a charmed existence during the most exciting and innovative period of television. Before *The Enterprise*, *The Millennium Falcon*, *Battlestar Galactica*; there was the *Polaris*.

Before Kirk, Spock and McCoy...  
Before Luke, Han and Chewbacca...  
There were Tom, Roger and Astor.  
He was the first!

Fact is, I've retired from the acting profession. I've been quoted as saying: "After *Tom*, where do you go?" That sounds about right. ★





## The 50s Golden Age of Science Fiction Television

### Part III: On the Outer Space Bandwagon



One of the heroes of Rocky Jones, *Space Ranger*, with his ship, the Oxy Jet—the class of the field of the 50s spacecraft.

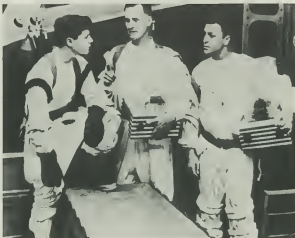
**C**aptain Video, *Space Patrol* and Tom Corbett, *Space Cadet* were the big three among the 50s space shows aimed at juveniles and young adults (audiences were estimated at about 50-55), but there were many other shows vying for those viewers.

From April 1950 to January 1951 there was fast channel switching on Saturdays when *Buck Rogers* on ABC immediately preceded *Captain Video* on DuMont. In this earliest TV version, Buck Rogers was a World War I flying ace trapped in suspended animation by the strange gases in a collapsed mine; he awoke in 2430 to discover that Niagara, New York, was the nation's new capital and that the planet was in constant danger of invasion or other forms of aggression. With Dr. Huer (Harry Sothorn), Barney Wade (Harry Kingston) and Wilma Deering (Lou Prentiss), Buck waged war against evil from a base hidden behind Niagara Falls.

ABC originally announced that an unknown, Eva Marie Saint, would play Wilma Deering, but at the last minute a cast change was announced. Ken Dibbs originated the role of Buck but was replaced after a couple of months by Robert Pastene. This Buck lasted one season. A few years later, the Buster Crabbe movie serial was edited for TV and syndicated as a half-season filler—thus becoming the second TV *Buck Rogers*.

Like the big three, *Buck Rogers* was telecast live. *Flash Gordon*, however, was one of the first series filmed for TV.

Sieve Hoffman played Flash, Irene Champlin played Dale, and Joseph Nash played Zarkov in the 39 episodes of *Flash Gordon* made in West Germany in 1953. It was made in English, specifically for an American audience, and was



Al Hodge (center), as Captain Video, talks to Video Rangers before going EVA.

shown here in syndication in '53 and '54. Flash had returned from his adventures on *Mongo* in this show and was now an operative in the GBI (Galactic Bureau of Investigation).

Joe Sarno, in his "Space Academy Newsletter"—a fanzine for devotees of 50s SF TV—states: "Get together over a beer with your typical Space Adventure fans and they will argue long and hard as to which of the

three long-running space adventure shows of the 1950s was the best. But on two things they will certainly agree: *Rocky Jones* was the best and *Flash Gordon* was the worst of the shorter running shows."

Apparently, the advantages of film were lost due to the extremely low budgets that sent the *Flash Gordon* film crew to Germany in the first place.



PHOTO © 1980 MCDONNELL PUBLISHING COMPANY

Cmndr. Corry (Ed Kemmer) takes his licks from the Black Falcon on Space Patrol



Middle: Rocky (Richard Crane) Jones and sidekick pilot the Orbit Jet. Above: Flash Gordon's spaceship from the original 1953 TV series filmed in W. Germany

*Rocky Jones, Space Ranger* ran for 31 episodes during the 1954-55 season on NBC and in syndication. It, too, was filmed, and it had more of the movie look typical of today's television. It starred Richard Crane, Jimmy Lyden, Scott Beckett and Sally Mansfield in stories set in the 21st Century involving interplanetary skulduggery. The format was quite reminiscent of the *Buck Rogers* formula—with a bit of *Queen of Outer Space* thrown in. In one continuing story, Ann Robinson—who played Sylvia in *War of the Worlds*—was the lascivious alien ruler (scantily clad and with pointy shoulders, in the pulp style of costuming); and in the same episode, Tor Johnson—one of the heaviest of Hollywood heavies—played the henchman of the villain.

Borrowed as the elements of *Rocky Jones* were, they added up to an original and fast-paced show. *Rod Brown of the Rocket Rangers*, on the other hand, was almost a direct steal from *Tom Corbett, Space Cadet*.

On CBS from April of 1953 to May of 1954, *Rod Brown* starred Cliff Robertson

(who later won an Oscar for *Charly*) as a young Ranger patrolling the space lanes. Once again the *Tom Corbett* lawyers went in to action and charged *Rod Brown* with numerous plagiarisms. According to a story in the June 3, 1953, issue of *Variety* the alleged violations included:

"(1) The Rocket Rangers, like the Space Cadets, operate in units of three. (2) The senior member of the Rangers' triumvirate—as in the three-man Space Patrol—is a 'hard, snide, sarcastic and overbearing character.' (3) The 'blastoff' and rocket landing procedure and terminology of the Rangers duplicate that of the Cadets. (4) The Rangers' interplanetary force, to which the CBS-TV rover boys graduate, is similar to the modus operandi of the Space Cadet 'solar guards'..."

And so—as with all entertainment trends—lack of originality signaled the beginning of the decline.

Other producers believed there was still gold in the asteroids, however, and continued trying to bump the big three out of their

established orbits. There was *Atom Squad* (1953), *Commando Cody* (1955), *Captain Midnight* (1955), *Captain Z-Ro* (1955), and probably others that ran too short a time to wind up in history books or memories. *The Adventures of Superman* was a big hit; it ran from 1953 to 1958 and is still around in syndication; but it was not a "space opera" of the sort being discussed.

In the long run, it may have been an extraneous circumstance that led to the demise of the space shows: the fact that TV production moved from New York to Los Angeles and began to be taken over by the movie industry. Film replaced live shows very quickly, and the cheapest "high-quality" film shows were outdoor dramas—Westerns, again. It's academic in any case; for the anti-hero mentality of the 1960s was festering even in the minds of program directors. In the 60s the best heroes were the ones you had to laugh at—like Maxwell Smart and Batman (with a few exceptions in various categories).

To be concluded next month with *Tales of Tomorrow*. ★



# A Blast from the Past When TV Was Live: TOM CORBETT MEETS BUZZ CORRY

By BRIAN MOSSMAN

**T**om Corbett, Space Cadet, and Commander Buzz Corry of the Space Patrol—two legendary space heroes of 1950s television—met on TV for the first time when they appeared in a 90-minute videotaped nostalgic documentary.

Frankie Thomas, who portrayed Tom Corbett on 300 radio broadcasts and five years of television, narrates the program; and Ed Kemmer, who played Buzz Corry in over a thousand episodes of *Space Patrol*, is a special guest star in *They Went To The Stars—Science Fiction When Television Was Live!*

The program features scenes from both *Space Cadet* and *Space Patrol* and clips from other shows of the period, including *Captain Video*, played by Al Hodge, the original made-for-TV version of *Buck Rogers*, played by Ken Dibbs and *Flash Gordon*, played by Steve Holland.

The producer of the program, Wade Williams III, was able to obtain the original costumes used on *Space Patrol* and *Space Cadet*, allowing the two heroes of *They Went To The Stars* to appear in their original uniforms.

"They're a little tighter now," says Kemmer, "but we can still get into them!"



Frankie Thomas (center) as Tom Corbett, flanked by cadets Manning (left) and Astro.

While in Kansas City, where the taping took place, Thomas appeared as a guest on the KCMO radio. The radio station opened its telephone lines to allow the audience to phone-in questions. Thomas managed to unravel one mystery that had kept a woman in suspense for 30 years.

The woman, as a young girl, had gone on

vacation and missed the outcome of one of *Tom Corbett's* cliff-hangers. She asked Thomas if he could recall the episode where "they found an abandoned planet and they had all the hieroglyphic stones...there was some reason they had to leave that planet. Why?"

Thomas remembered, out of all the shows he did, that particular episode. "The planet had had a civilization and for some climatic reasons they had to go somewhere. The planet had reverted to the age of dinosaurs."

Thomas and Kemmer talked about the hectic days of live telecasting and the significance of the formative years of today's greatest entertainment medium. The *Tom Corbett* show was one of the top rated TV shows of the day, right behind the Milton Berle show. Both Kemmer and Thomas remember what it was like to perform on a live telecast. "It was like a stage play—when the curtain went up, that was it!" comments Thomas. Says Kemmer: "Watching the shows you'll see that there's no chance for a retake...the set could fall in, you could say the wrong lines; timing was very important and by the end of the show you may have to catch up three or four minutes so you start racing through dialogue." Thomas adds: "We had one case where a space pirate got hit with a Parlo-ray and got up not knowing that the camera was still on him."

In *They Went To The Stars—Science Fiction When Television Was Live*, both actors reminisce about their on-the-air bloopers and some of the sales pitches for spaceships, helmets, decoder belts, ray guns—things viewers could order for 25 cents and a boxtop.

The finale of the program is a series of excerpts from *Tales of Tomorrow* that feature dozens of famous actors. Introducing the segment, Thomas says, "You'll see Lon Chaney, Jr. in *Frankenstein*, and Boris Karloff as a time traveler, and I'll show you Paul Newman's first appearance on television!" Newman was paid \$164 for his week's work on a *Tales of Tomorrow* episode entitled "Ice From Space."

"*They Went To The Stars—Science Fiction When Television Was Live*" was made for syndication and the home video cassette markets by North Star Productions. Science-fiction writer and *STARLOG* columnist David Houston, is writer-director of the show.



That's a youthful Ed (Buzz Corry) Kemmer behind the controls of a Space Patrol cruiser with the rest of the cast. Opposite, Kemmer and Thomas as they are today



## FilmFax # 1 (1986)

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*Note: this scan has additional pages of Space Patrol from other magazines.*